ROYAL HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY

HOW TO GARDEN

WHEN YOU'RE NEW TO GARDENING

THE BASICS FOR ABSOLUTE BEGINNERS

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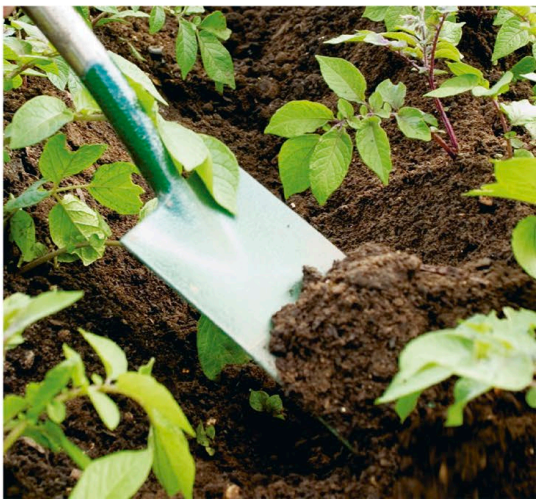

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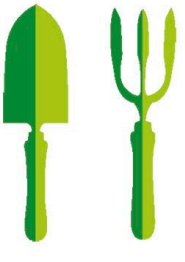

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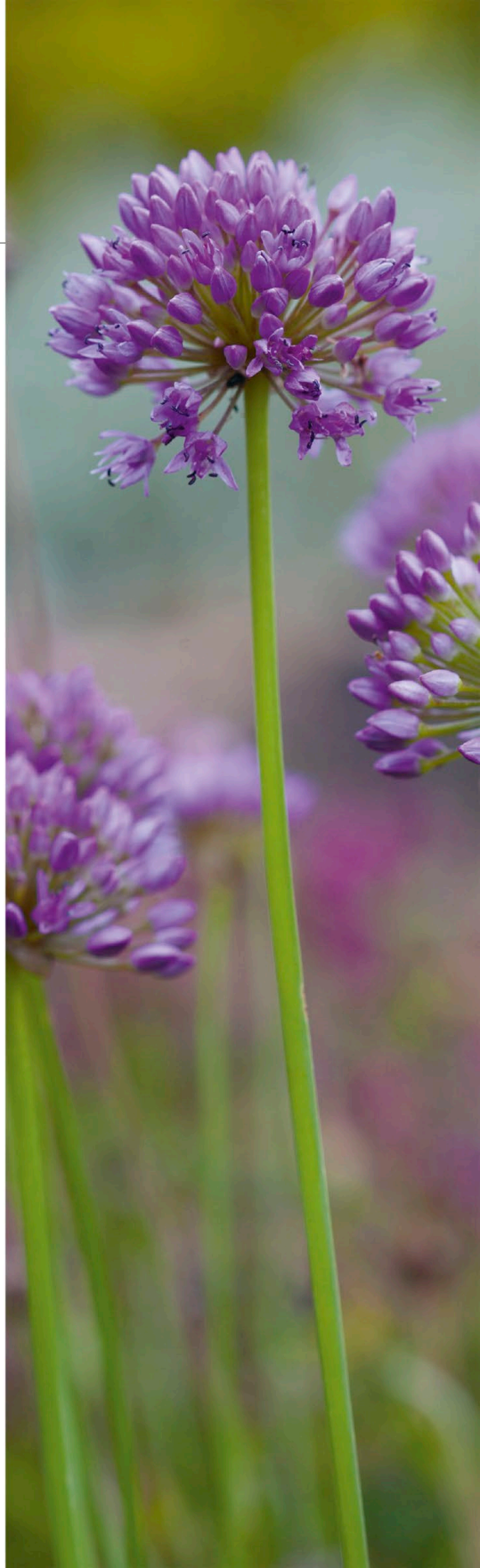


INTRODUCTION

Planting up your own patch of earth is a wonderful experience, but deciding what to grow in the land that lies before you can be a daunting task. For those starting out, filled with excitement at the idea of growing fruit and vegetables, or planting trees and flowers, this book provides the answer.

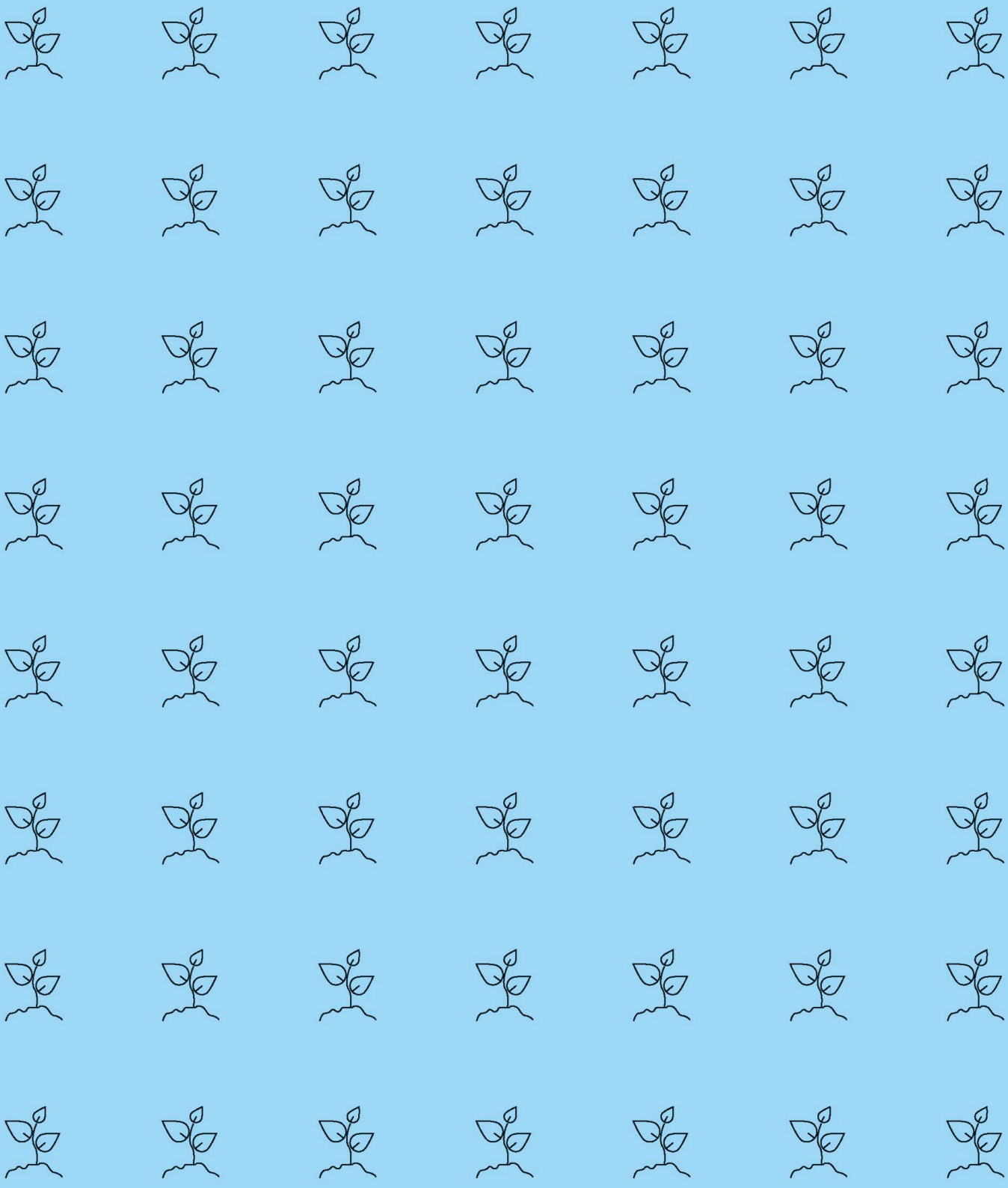
"Getting Started" will help you to get to know your garden and choose plants that will grow well in particular soil types and conditions year after year. In "Flowers & Foliage" you'll learn the secrets of sowing seeds, be amazed by the versatility of container gardening, and discover how to make a new border. In "Lawns" you'll find out how to make the most out of possibly the largest part of the garden, while in "Grasses" you'll learn to nurture a distinctive group of plants.

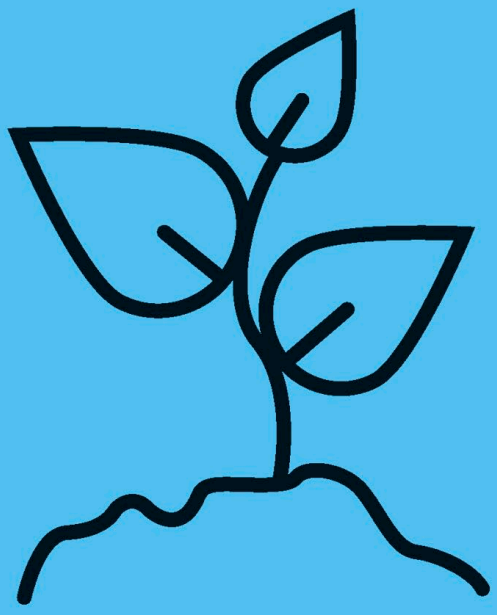
As your confidence grows alongside your gardening knowledge and skills, you'll be encouraged to try more ambitious projects such as making a tower of flowers in "Climbers", shaping a topiary cone in "Shrubs", or planting and caring for your first tree in "Small Trees".

For many beginners, the idea of having your own patch of land will go hand in hand with growing your own fruits and vegetables. In these chapters, you'll take simple steps towards producing your first crops, with ideas designed for gardens of any shape or size. Herbs will quickly earn a place in your edible garden, whether in beds and borders, or in hanging baskets and windowboxes.

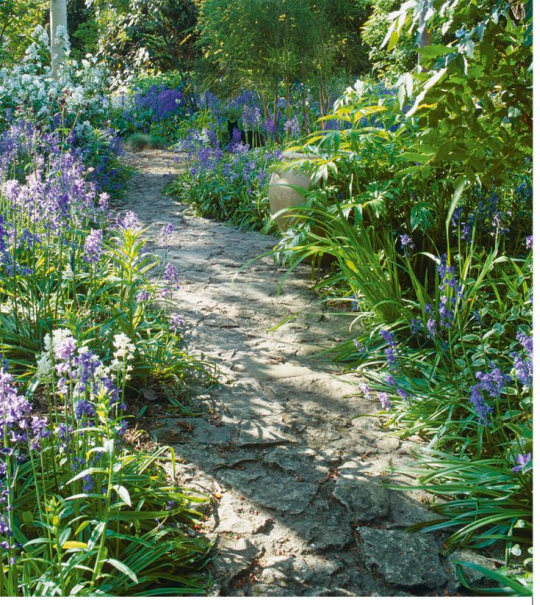
The final chapter on "Practicalities" shows you how to water and feed your plants, as well as explaining essential maintenance jobs to keep your garden healthy and tidy, and to protect your plants against pests and diseases.

Creating a garden that you can enjoy and keep looking good all year round is easier than you think! By following the steps and projects outlined in this book you will reap instant rewards and long-term successes so that you can enjoy your garden in all seasons.





GETTING **STARTED**



WHICH WAY DOES **YOUR GARDEN FACE?**

The direction in which your garden faces affects the amount of sun and shade it receives. Consider this when choosing your plants, to ensure they will thrive in the conditions you have to offer.

KEY POINTS

- Trees, hedges, and shrub borders act as buffers. They slow the wind and provide shelter for plants and for people.
- A sunny spot can be enhanced with a raised bed to improve drainage for tender plants.
- A windy area can be sheltered with a permeable barrier, such as a trellis.

SEE ALSO

- **KNOW YOUR SOIL** >> 12/13
- **CHOOSE HEALTHY PLANTS** >> 20/21

Simple observation of how much sun your garden receives will give an idea of its orientation. South-facing gardens receive the most sun, and north-facing sites the least. To work it out accurately, use a compass. Stand with your back to your house wall – the reading from here shows the direction your garden faces.

EAST AND WEST

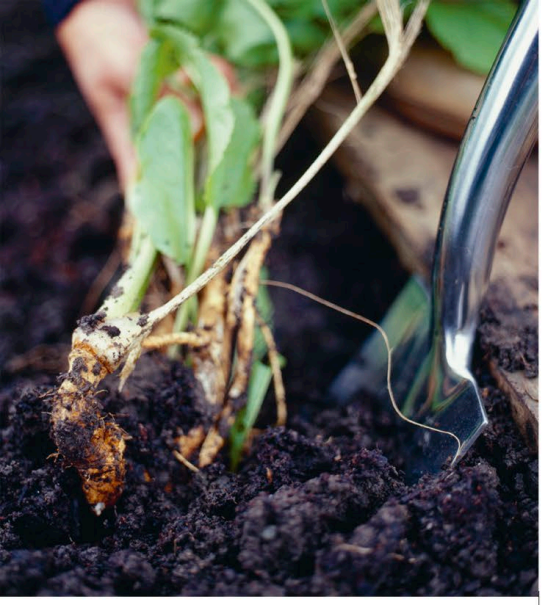
East-facing gardens are sunny but cold in the morning; hardy plants that like shade are a good choice here. West-facing walls and fences have sun in the afternoon and evening and offer milder growing conditions.

The amount of direct sun and the sun's position in the garden change as the day progresses. A south-facing garden will have sun all day, a north-facing one much less, perhaps none in winter. Sunny gardens are often more desirable, but shade does have its advantages. There are many wonderful shade-loving plants that prefer to be out of direct sun, such as *Mahonia* or cyclamen, while in a sunny garden, slightly tender plants from Mediterranean regions, for example, will flourish. The key is to work with what you have.

Morning: areas that are in sun now may be in shade by the afternoon.

Midday: the sun is overhead, so the garden receives maximum sun.

Evening: as the sun sets, the glancing light casts soft shadows.



KNOW **YOUR SOIL**

Understanding what kind of soil you have will help you to decide which plants will thrive in your garden and ensure the best results. You can always make improvements to your soil, but you also need to work with its basic type.

KEY POINTS

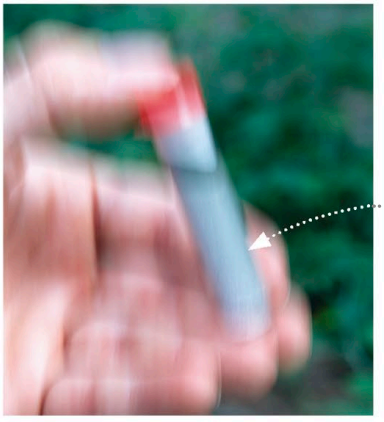
- **Finding out your soil's properties** saves time and money as you can buy suitable plants.
- **Look around local gardens** and make a note of the plants that grow well in your area. These are all likely to be suited to your soil type and therefore an excellent indication of what will flourish in your own garden.

SEE ALSO

- **IMPROVE YOUR SOIL** >> 16/17
- **MAKE COMPOST** >> 234/235

THE PERFECT SOIL

All plants have different needs. However, loam soil – a mix of clay and sand – is generally seen as a good thing. Ideal soils also have a fairly neutral pH and contain a good amount of organic matter.



Testing acid soil Acidic soils are lime-free, unlike limy, or slightly chalky, alkaline soils. Some plants will grow well in acidic soils, but others won't. Buy a soil pH test kit from a garden centre to assess soil acidity. At home, take soil samples from around the garden. Shake each soil sample in the chemical solution, then leave the mixture to settle.

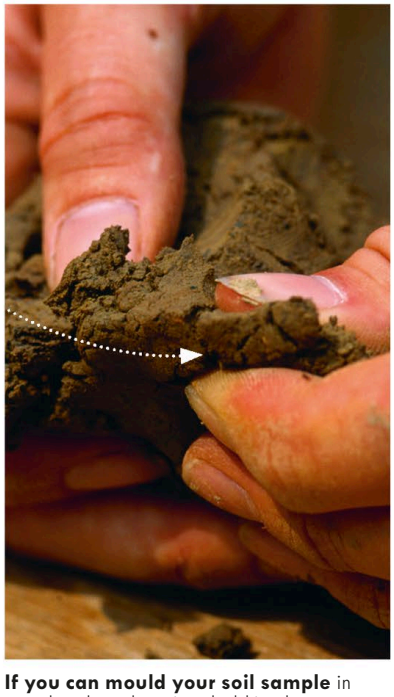
Determining acidity Match the colour to the card in the test kit. The pH scale runs from 14 (very alkaline) to 1 (very acidic), with 7 being neutral.

Testing sandy soil Easy to dig over and weed, sandy soils often heat up earlier in spring than clay soils. Their free-draining nature can be an asset for growing certain plants, but during heavy rainfall precious nutrients can be washed away. As a result, sandy soils may be quite low in nutrients. The more sand a soil contains, the more it will crumble when a handful is compressed, because it has very little of the sticky bonding agent supplied by clay particles. Soils with a high sand content will feel coarse, gritty, and dry when worked through your fingertips.

Test for sandy soil by rubbing earth through your fingertips. It will feel gritty.

Squeeze and release soil then press lightly with your thumb. Sandy soils will crumble.

Testing clay soil While clay soils are potentially the most fertile and productive, clay particles are extremely fine and slippery when wet, forming a dense paste that sticks to boots and garden tools. Soils that have a very high clay content can become waterlogged and "puddle" in wet weather, or set like concrete and crack in droughts. In such situations, clay soil can be greatly improved by digging in plenty of grit and organic matter.



If you can mould your soil sample in your hands and get it to hold its shape, you have clay. When moistened, it feels slimy.

Rolling a sample into a sausage and bending it into a ring reveals a very clay soil.

Growing your own plants from seed is a simple and inexpensive way to fill your garden. First find out about your garden's aspect and soil, and then start to plan what you want to plant and grow.

IMPROVING **YOUR SOIL**

Most garden soils benefit from some preparation before planting, as well as ongoing treatments to keep them fertile. Both heavy clays and light sandy soils can be improved to help grow healthier plants.

KEY POINTS

- **Try not to walk on clay** when it is wet and sticky – you can damage the soil structure and worsen the drainage problem.
- **There's no use digging** rock-hard clay soil in summer, as the clods break up into dust.
- **Both very light** and very heavy soils benefit from annual additions of organic matter.

SEE ALSO

- **KNOW YOUR SOIL** >> 12/13
- **CHOOSING COMPOST** >> 18/19

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Topsoil is the uppermost layer of earth, and it is usually darker in colour and concentrated in organic matter, moisture, and nutrients.

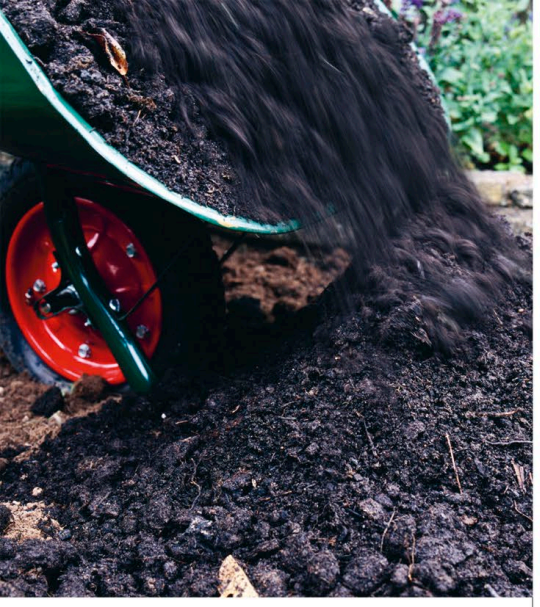
Subsoil is the soil lying immediately under topsoil. It is usually lighter in colour, because it contains less organic matter than topsoil.

Increasing drainage in clay soils Incorporating large amounts of coarse organic matter, such as well-rotted manure or spent mushroom compost, into the top layer will increase drainage, and grit can help too (see opposite). You can work clay soil earlier in the season if you keep it dry over winter under plastic sheeting. Acidic clay can be broken up by applying a top-dressing of garden lime in spring, but don't then use fertilizer as the two do not mix.

Improving fertility and moisture in sandy soil
Well-drained sandy soils can be cultivated all year round, but the depth of fertile topsoil that plants can root into may be quite thin. The underlying subsoil is often compacted and mixed with rock fragments. Try to avoid bringing this layer to the surface as it is less fertile. In late winter or early spring, add a layer of well-rotted manure, or spent mushroom or garden compost, at least 10cm (4in) deep. This functions as a mulch, sealing in winter moisture and making soils less susceptible to summer drought. It also increases fertility in the soil around the plants' roots.

A coarse grit about 10mm (1/2in) in diameter is ideal

Add coarse grit to improve drainage If you have soggy or clay soil, adding coarse grit will increase the drainage by decreasing the moisture-holding capacity of your soil. Incorporate the grit to a shovel's depth and in large quantities. Grit is not expensive, but it is very heavy, so calculate how much you need and remember it is easy to add more at a later date. Ensure only clean horticultural grit is used to avoid salt contamination.



CHOOSING THE RIGHT **POTTING COMPOST**

There are four common kinds of potting compost, but how do you know which one you need? Which is the best for long-lived plants? What is the fuss about peat? Are peat-free composts any good? Here are the pros and cons.

KEY POINTS

- **Different brands of loam-based** compost have variable quality. Check reviews of brands in the gardening press.
- **Plants need feeding** after six weeks when using peat-based compost.
- **Coir-based compost** is not entirely "green" – it is peat-free, but has to be shipped thousands of miles at significant environmental cost.

SEE ALSO

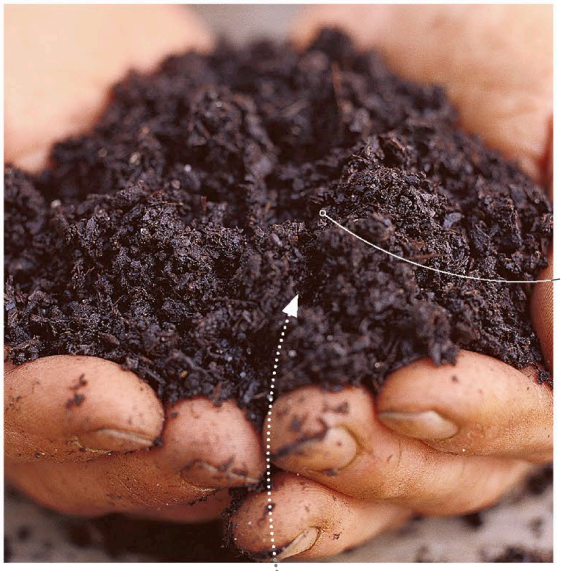
- **COLOURFUL CONTAINERS** >> 36/37
- **MAKE HANGING BASKETS** >> 38/39
- **SHRUBS IN POTS** >> 112/115

FROM SEED TO PLANT

Larger plants need good nutrition to grow and thrive, so for these plants look for composts that advertise added fertilizer. Seeds and seedlings do not require extra fertilizer until they are larger.

Loam-based compost Also called soil-based compost, this is made from sterilized loam, with the most popular types being the John Innes composts. These are available in different recipes or strengths, and range from No.1 for seeds and cuttings to No.3, which contains the most fertilizer, for long-lived plants such as shrubs. Start feeding pot plants after three months when the nutrients in the compost run out.

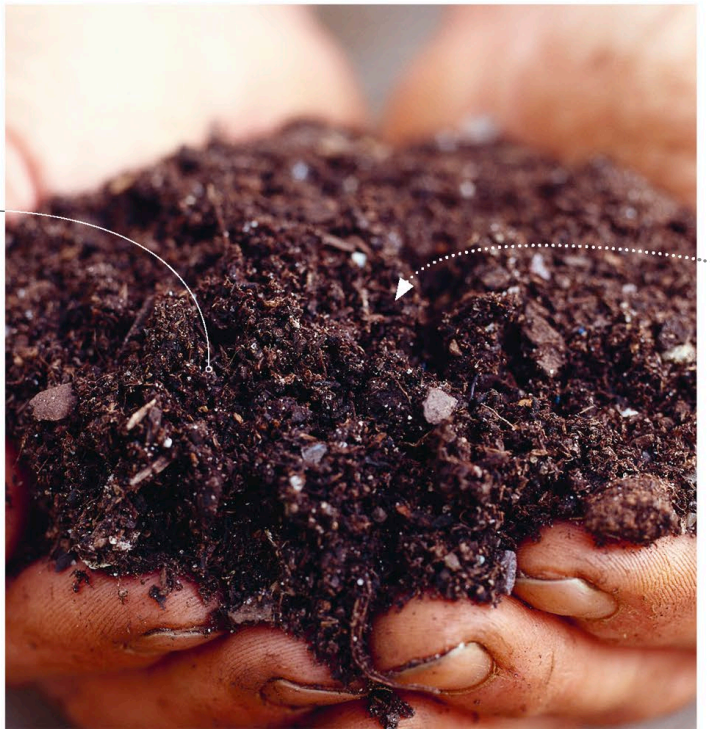
Peat-based compost Also known as loamless or soilless compost, peat-based compost includes multi-purpose types for seeds and general potting, and is best for short-term, one-season displays. It is lightweight and well aerated, and the lack of nutrients is easily compensated for by the use of slow-release fertilizers. If the peat dries out, it shrinks and can be difficult to re-wet.



Heat treatment has eliminated pests, diseases, and weeds

Peat-free compost As concern about peat-stripped habitats grows, sales of peat-free compost have increased. One of the least environmentally damaging composts is green-waste compost. Made from recycled household waste and often sold by local councils, it is dark coloured and heavy, and suitable for most garden and pot plant needs. It is inexpensive, and holds water and nutrients well.

Coir-based compost dries out quickly so plants need to be watered more frequently



Coir-based compost Made from shredded coconut husks, coir is sold loose or in blocks; the latter need to be soaked for about 20 minutes before use. Since coir is low in nutrients, it is generally mixed with multi-purpose or John Innes compost. You can add one-third coir-based compost to two-thirds additional compost to improve its nutritional value for plants. Use it for annual displays in containers where a lightweight compost is needed, such as windowboxes and wall pots, or on balconies.

CHOOSING **HEALTHY PLANTS**

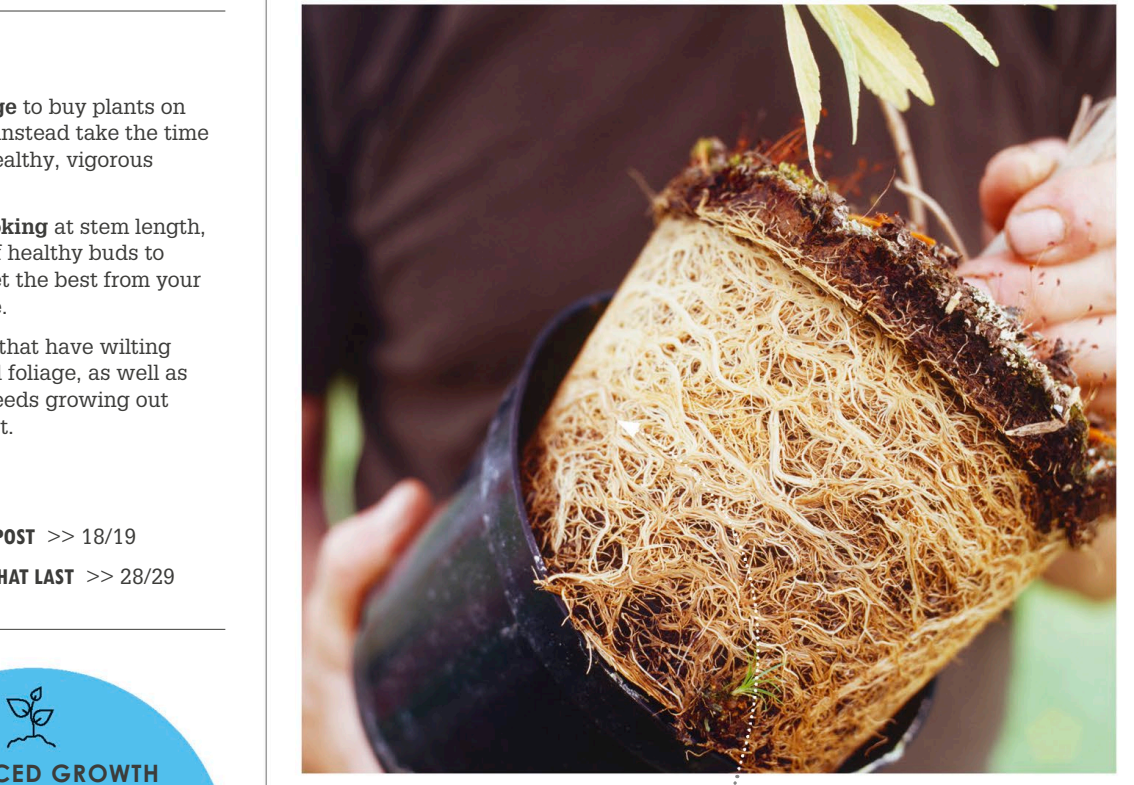
When you have found a plant you like, give it a quick once-over to make sure it has potential. Try to slide the plant out of its pot and look for healthy white roots growing in the compost. Choose a plant with vigororous top-growth and plenty of buds.

KEY POINTS

- **Resist the urge** to buy plants on impulse, and instead take the time to choose a healthy, vigorous specimen.
- **Instead of looking** at stem length, look for lots of healthy buds to ensure you get the best from your new purchase.
- **Avoid plants** that have wilting or discoloured foliage, as well as those with weeds growing out of the compost.

SEE ALSO

- **CHOOSING COMPOST** >> 18/19
- **GROW PLANTS THAT LAST** >> 28/29



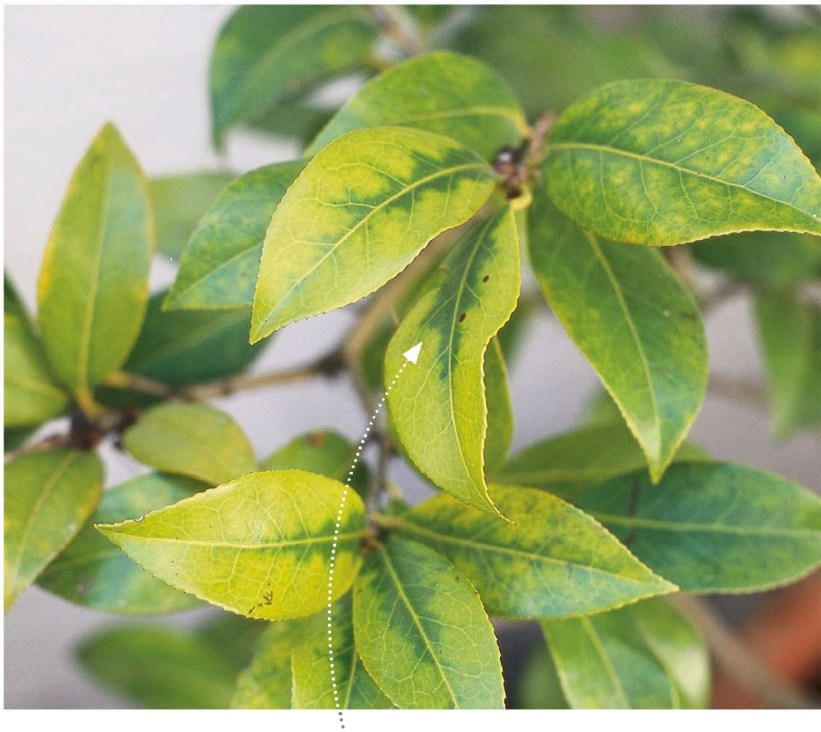
Check the roots Avoid plants with so much congested root growth that you can't see the soil, a problem known as "pot bound", and/or with a knot of roots protruding from the drainage holes. Cramped, restricted roots can result in poor top-growth.

BALANCED GROWTH

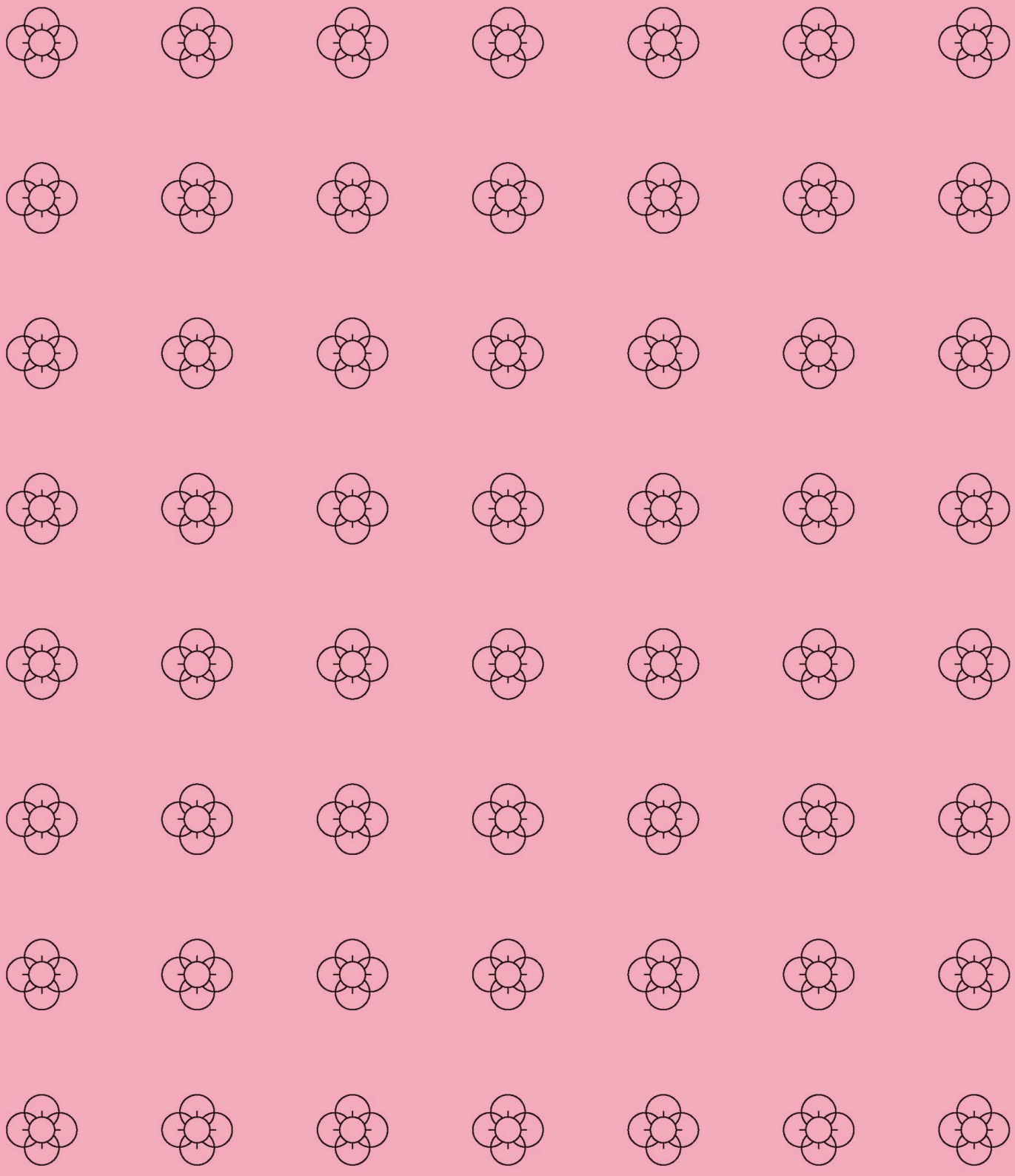
Check that plants have an even spread of top-growth. Some plants have a "front" and "back" because nursery staff don't have time to keep turning them to the sun, and as a result the growth may be lopsided.

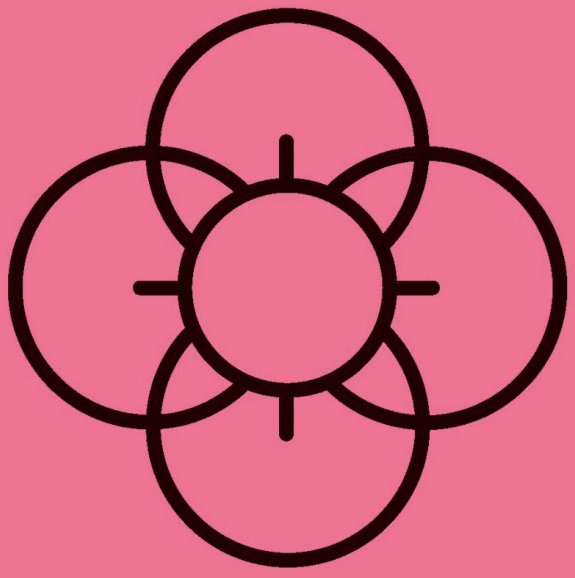
Reject plants with poor growth
If an established plant has poor growth, there's a good reason for it. It may come from weak stock, in which case it will never amount to much, or it may have been badly neglected (right). The fact that it has been well watered on the day you see it doesn't mean that it has been well watered in the preceding days, or that it hasn't been left lying on its side in a shady corner.

Big isn't always best It's very tempting to buy the largest or tallest plant available, but don't equate size with potential – that can be a waste of money. Look for a sturdy young plant with plenty of new shoots and buds as well as a healthy root system that will flourish.

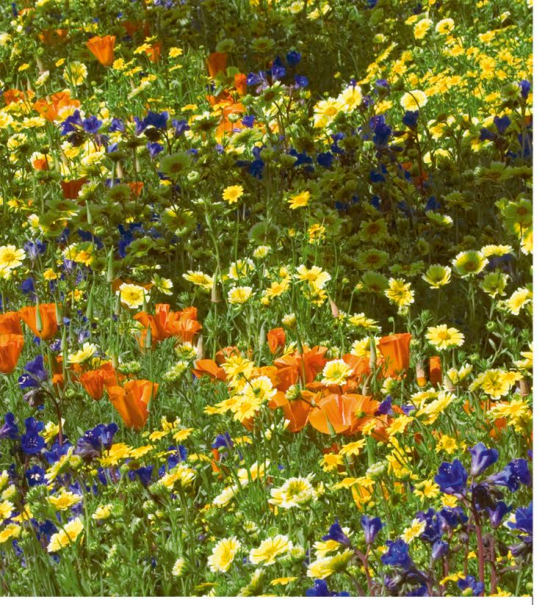


Inspect your specimen When buying from a reputable garden centre it's very unlikely that you will encounter plant problems. However, you can hold the plant up to the light and check both sides of the leaves and stem. Discoloured leaves may be a sign of a nutrient deficiency or another ailment.





FLOWERS
& FOLIAGE



SOWING SEEDS **OUTDOORS**

Many hardy annuals, such as California poppies (*Eschscholzia*), are best sown outside where they are to grow and flower. This avoids having to sow in pots and transplant, although not all seeds can be sown this way. Check the seed packet for advice.

YOU WILL NEED

- seeds of hardy annuals, eg California poppies (*Eschscholzia*)
- fork
- rake
- cane
- watering can with fine sprayhead

SEE ALSO

- **SOWING SEEDS INDOORS** >> 26/27
- **GROW PLANTS THAT LAST** >> 28/29
- **SEEDS IN POTS** >> 178/179

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Annuals are plants that complete their lifecyle (flowering, setting seed, and dying) within one year.

Hardy annuals withstand frost and cold and so can grow outside all year.

Half-hardy annuals are killed by frost and so are usually sown under cover then transplanted outside.

1 Select an open area without any competing plants for sowing the seeds. Lightly fork over the soil, breaking up large clods, and then remove large stones, weeds, and debris with a rake. Work the soil until it is fine and level.

2 Make drills (shallow depressions to sow seed into) in the soil by pushing a pole or bamboo cane into the soil surface. Drills make it easier to identify your seedlings; weed seedlings are unlikely to emerge in straight lines.

3 Place the seeds into the palm of your hand, and aim to pour the seed gently from a crease as you pass your hand along the drill. Do not sow the seed too thickly. Larger seeds can be placed in the drill with your fingertips.

4 Lightly cover the drills with fine soil, and water well using a can with a fine sprayhead to avoid disturbing the seeds. Keep the seedbed moist and remove any weeds. When the seedlings emerge, carefully thin out close-growing plants.

SOWING
SEEDS INDOORS

While many short-lived plants can be sown outside in the garden, sowing seeds under cover gives plants an earlier start and often produces better results. Seeds can be sown in pots in a greenhouse, in a cold frame (a box with a glazed lid), or on a sunny windowsill.

YOU WILL NEED

- seed packets, eg nasturtium, pansies, chrysanthemum, or love-in-a-mist
- seed-sowing compost
- 9cm (3½in) plant pots
- watering can with fine sprayhead
- small tray
- plant labels
- waterproof pen

SEE ALSO

- **SOWING SEEDS OUTDOORS** >> 24/25
- **GROW PLANTS THAT LAST** >> 28/29

LABEL YOUR POTS

Always write a label for your seeds using a waterproof pen. Include the name of the plant and the date of sowing so that you don't forget. It can be fun at the end of the season to collect seeds for free from the garden.

Buy a fine low-nutrient compost to grow seeds

1 Fill a clean or new 9cm (3½in) pot with a good-quality seed-sowing compost, leaving a 2–3cm (¾–1¼in) gap beneath the rim of the pot. Firm the compost gently to create an even surface for the seeds.

2 Using a watering can with a fine sprayhead, dampen the compost, being careful not to disturb it by splashing too much. Alternatively, stand the pots in a tray of water until the surface is moist, then remove to allow them to drain off.

3 Sow seed evenly but don't over sow as pricking out excess seedlings will be difficult. A couple of large seeds per pot or a light sprinkling of small seeds is enough, covered with a fine layer of compost if instructed on the seed packet.

4 When the seeds have developed and produced a few sets of leaves, get them accustomed to being outdoors by placing the pots outside during the day for a few weeks. You can then plant them out in the garden.

GROWING
PLANTS THAT LAST

Perennial plants are the foundation of planning a great garden, often filling beds and borders. It is worth taking a little extra care at the start so that these plants grow and establish well as they mature.

YOU WILL NEED

- 17cm (6½in) potted plant, mint is shown here
- spade
- watering can
- garden compost

SEE ALSO

- **MAKING A BORDER** >> 44/47
- **RAISED BEDS AND EDGES** >> 50/53
- **CHOOSING FLOWERS** >> 54/57

JARGON BUSTER

Perennials are plants that live for more than two years, and may in fact live for many more years than that. They grow back each spring or summer from roots that go dormant in the soil over winter.

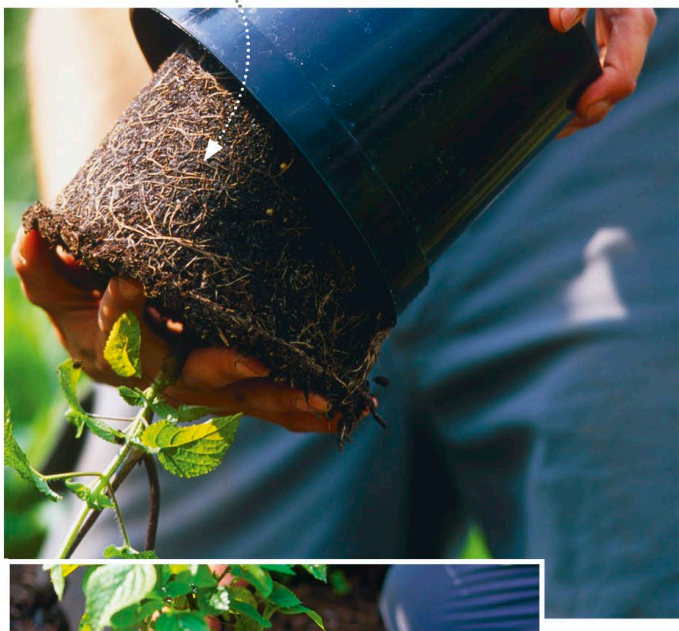
Herbaceous perennials are non-woody plants, unlike trees and shrubs, which are woody perennials. Herbaceous perennials typically flower for a certain amount of time in one season, unlike shorter-lived annual plants that may flower for much of spring and summer.

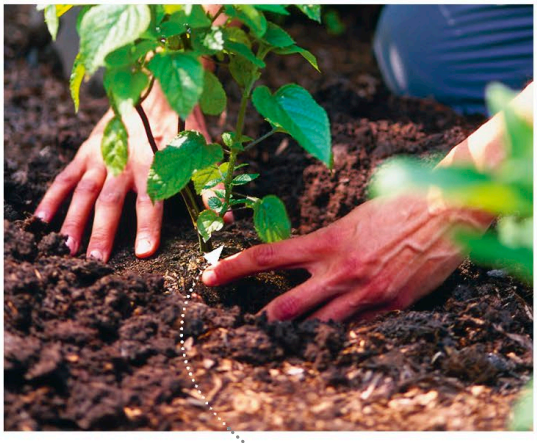
Make sure the spot chosen to plant is weed-free

1 Place the plant in its pot on the ground to make sure you are happy with its position, before you go ahead and plant. The soil in the pot should be soaked before planting to give the plant a good start.

2 With a spade, dig a hole wider and deeper than the size of the plant's container. Add organic matter, such as garden compost, to the base of the hole and dig it in well. Pour some water into the hole before planting.

3 Remove the plant carefully from its pot. If the roots are tightly packed around the root ball, the plant is pot-bound and the roots need to be teased out gently. Place the plant in the hole, slightly deeper in the ground than when it was in its pot.





4 Backfill soil around the roots, firming the earth as you go and ensuring the plant stands straight in its hole. Avoid raising the soil around the stems; the ground should be slightly sunken with the plant at the centre. Water well.

GROWING **SUNFLOWERS**

Bold and often extremely tall, sunflowers are one of the first flowers that many children recognize. They are fast-growing and are rewarding to grow from seed, often flowering into the autumn.

YOU WILL NEED

- sunflower seeds
- 9cm (3½in) pots (preferably biodegradable pots)
- seed compost
- garden compost
- watering can
- plant feed

SEE ALSO

- **SOWING SEEDS OUTDOORS** >> 24/25
- **SOWING SEEDS INDOORS** >> 26/27
- **COLOURFUL CONTAINERS** >> 36/37

GROWING STRONGER

Tie sunflowers to canes as they grow to stop them from being blown over. At a certain size, they should be self-supporting, although extra tall varieties may need a strong support. Water regularly for best results.

1 Fill a 9cm (3½in) pot with seed compost. Biodegradable pots, such as those made from coir fibres, are particularly useful as they can be planted directly into the ground, but seedlings will do just as well when grown in plastic pots.

2 Plant one seed per pot, pushing it just below the surface. Sow in spring indoors or in a heated greenhouse. Seeds can also be planted direct into the ground in late spring and early summer, but for the largest plants, start early.

Sunflowers grow very quickly from seed

3 Once the seeds have developed, keep the plants well watered. If you have started early, you may need to pot again into a larger pot while the plant is still indoors to keep it growing strongly.

4 When roots start showing through the bottom of the pot, put your seedling into a larger pot or out into the ground. When all danger of frost has passed, plant into ground that has been prepared with plenty of garden compost.

Few plants are as impressive or as easy to grow as sunflowers. Held on tall stems, the huge brightly coloured flowers provide a dazzling display in late summer.

PREPARING POTS FOR **PLANTING**

All pots, large and small, need a few minutes' worth of preparation. Plants will live longer and look better if their pots are clean, with good drainage. Also consider the weight of your containers to avoid back-breaking lifting after planting.

KEY POINTS

- **As an extra precaution,** containers that previously held diseased plants can be soaked in baby bottle sterilizing solution.
- **Lining terracotta pots** prevents salts in the compost and water from leaching through the clay and discolouring the container.
- **Save money and compost** by filling up the bottom of the pot with polystyrene for short-lived displays.

SEE ALSO

- **CHOOSING COMPOST** >> 18/19
- **COLOURFUL CONTAINERS** >> 36/37

MOVING HEAVY POTS

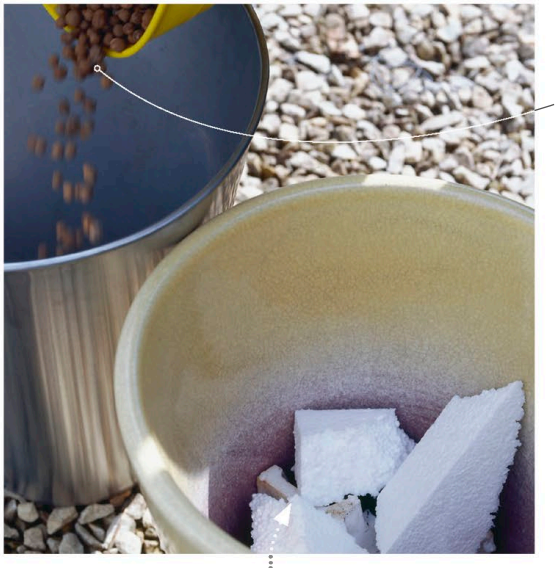
It can be hard work to move large, full, heavy pots on your own. The best solution is to transport a container on a trolley to avoid dropping it or hurting your back.

Check for drainage holes Most plant pots are made with drainage holes so that excess water can drain away (if it can't, the plant will rot). If a pot doesn't have holes, you will need to make some. One way of doing this is to drill into the base several times with a masonry bit.

Small drainage holes allow less compost to fall out

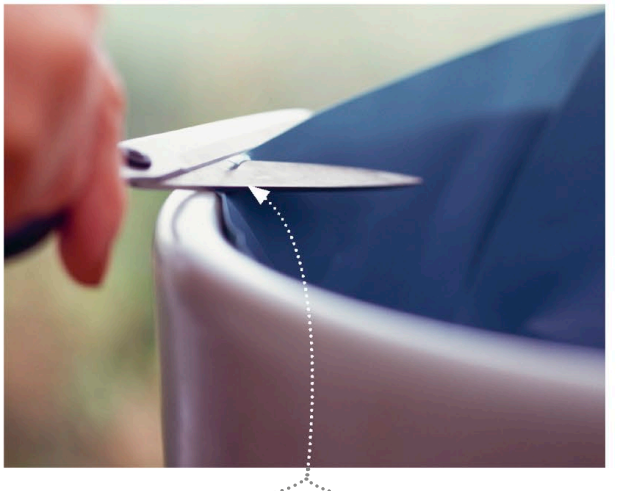
Hammering holes You can either leave the drilled holes as they are, or tap them with a hammer to make one larger drainage hole. Choose clay containers with a thick base, which is less likely to fracture when hit with a hammer.

Stop the rot To help water drain freely, place broken pieces of pots or polystyrene at the base. Alternatively, use a layer of fine mesh with gravel on top. This prevents drainage holes from becoming blocked and compost from being flushed out.



Lighten the load Pots are heavy when filled with compost, and even heavier after being watered. To reduce the weight, fill the bottom third with polystyrene chunks. This is best for short-lived displays or plants that don't have long roots.

Re-use old pots It is a good idea to clean all pots, including those left in the garden or stacked up in the garage, immediately before use. This applies even if the pots were stored under cover and cleaned months ago, before being put away. Undisturbed pots can be breeding grounds for pests and diseases, larvae, and baby slugs. Scrub with detergent and rinse well.



Line pots Clay pots that have not been glazed on the inside are vulnerable to frost damage. To prevent this, line pots that you want to sit outside all year with heavy-duty plastic. Push it well down into the pot, and use a pair of scissors to cut out drainage holes in the bottom. When the pot has been planted up, trim away the excess liner flush with the top of the container.

PLANT UP A COLOURFUL **CONTAINER**

One of the simplest ways of bringing a luxuriant display of seasonal colour into your garden is to plant up a few pots. Follow these easy guidelines to help ensure that your displays are attractive and long lasting.

YOU WILL NEED

- potted plants, such as verbena and petunias, and trailing leaves like ivy
- large container
- garden compost
- water-retaining crystals
- gravel mulch
- watering can

SEE ALSO

- **CHOOSING COMPOST** >> 18/19
- **PREPARING POTS** >> 34/35
- **CHOOSING FLOWERS** >> 54/57

JARGON BUSTER

Mulches are added around the plants in containers and beds.

They can be biodegradable (eg garden compost or bark chippings) or non-biodegradable (eg gravel or sea shells). Mulches are used to help prevent moisture loss from soil and to suppress weeds.

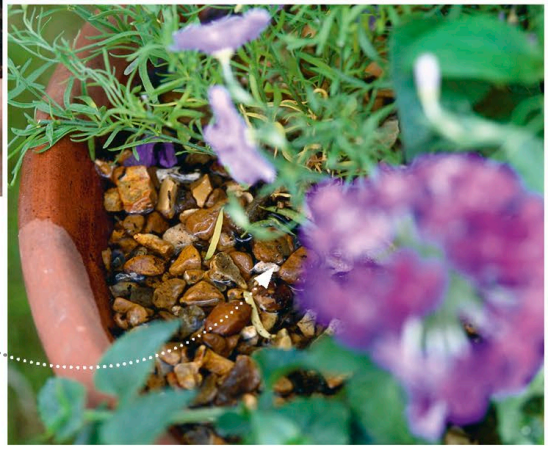
Water-retaining crystals mean less watering for container plants

1 Before you plant the container, add water-retaining crystals to the compost. These swell up once moist, and provide plants with an extra reservoir of water, which helps to ensure that they do not suffer during dry spells.

2 Arrange your selected plants in their original pots in the container to see how they look – this way, adjustments can be easily made. When you are satisfied, remove the plants from their pots and plant up the container.

3 Fill around the plants with compost when they are in their final positions, and ensure you leave a 5cm (2in) gap between the top of the soil and the rim of the container, to allow for easy watering and a layer of gravel.

Firm the compost gently so it is level with the plants



4 Spread a 2cm (¾in) deep gravel layer over the top of the compost as a mulch to conserve moisture in summer, deter weeds, and prevent unsightly compost splash when watering. It makes an attractive finish to the planting.

MAKE A SPRING **HANGING BASKET**

Seasonal hanging baskets are easy to put together, and can vary from the delicate and subtle to the big and blowsy. Plant the dominant plants on top and decorative trailers around the sides.

YOU WILL NEED

- pot plants, eg skimmia, cyclamen, heathers, and pansies
- hanging basket
- basket liner or sphagnum moss
- polythene liner
- wide short pot and small plastic pot
- loam-free compost – lighter than loam-based compost
- water-retaining crystals
- newspaper and scissors

SEE ALSO

- **COLOURFUL CONTAINERS** >> 36/37
- **CHOOSING FLOWERS** >> 54/57

JARGON BUSTER

Sphagnum moss is found in wet places like peat bogs and marshes. It soaks up water like a sponge and can retain moisture during dry spells.

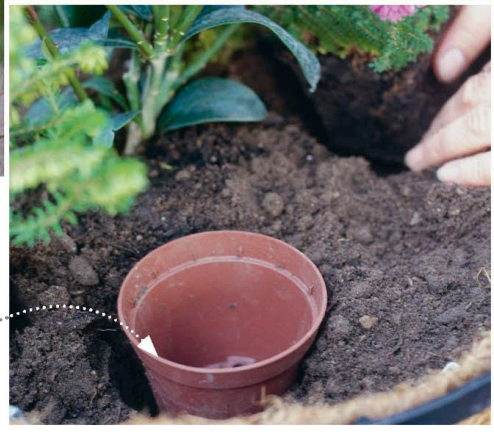
Loam-free compost can be made from recycled household waste and is sometimes sold by local councils. It is rich in nutreints and retains water well.

1 Stand the hanging basket on a wide, short pot to keep it stable during preparation. Line the basket with a proprietary basket liner, or use sphagnum moss and pack it in tightly to a minimum thickness of 3cm (1¼in).

2 Lay a circle of polythene at the base to help retain water. Cut holes in the liner, about 5cm (2in) above the base for trailing plants. Fill the basket to that level with loam-free compost, mixed with water-retaining crystals.

Push trailing plants through a slit until the roots just rest inside the liner

3 Wrap paper around the root ball of each trailing plant (like this ivy) to protect it, and gently insert through a hole. The roots should be level with the compost in the basket. Add extra compost and firm it around the plants.



4 Put a small plastic pot near the centre of the basket to act as a watering reservoir. Plant short plants at the edge of the basket, and tall ones in the centre. Fill in around them with compost. Water the plants through the plastic pot.

PLANTING A **SHADY WINDOWBOX**

You can bring colour to a windowsill that receives little or no direct light with a well-planted windowbox. This one has been planned for summer interest with colours that glow in darker corners.

YOU WILL NEED

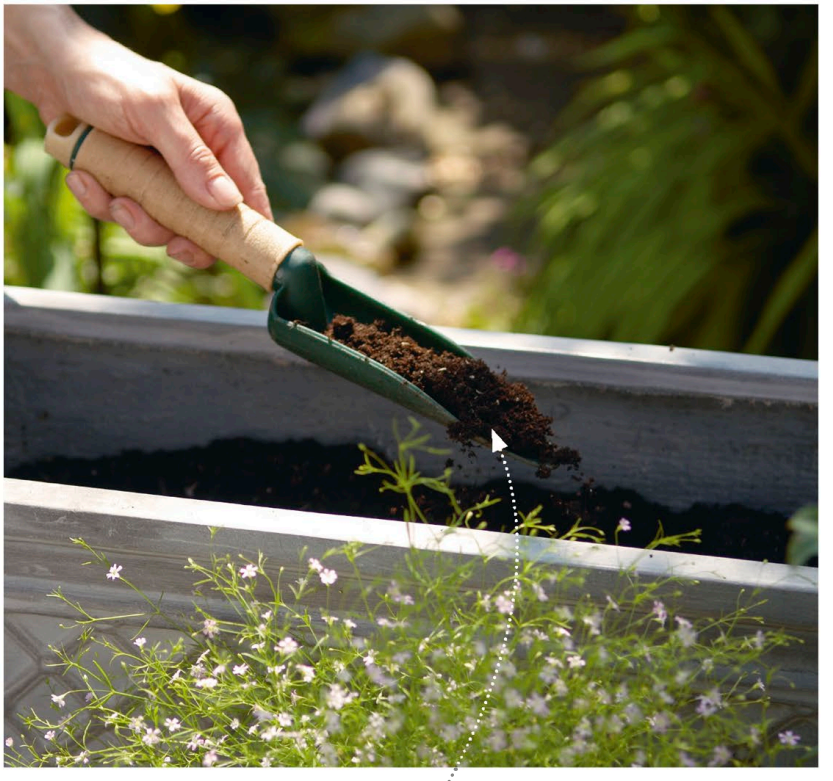
- shade-tolerant windowbox plants, eg artemisia, gypsophila, celosia, and fuchsia
- windowbox container
- gravel
- garden compost
- slow-release fertilizer

SEE ALSO

- **COLOURFUL CONTAINERS** >> 36/37
- **MAKE HANGING BASKETS** >> 38/39
- **CHOOSING FLOWERS** >> 54/57

SALAD IN THE SHADE

Salad leaves, such as certain loose-leaf lettuces, can be grown in shadier spots. Lettuce leaves can be cut off for sandwiches or salads from the convenience of your kitchen window, and will regrow to yield more crops.

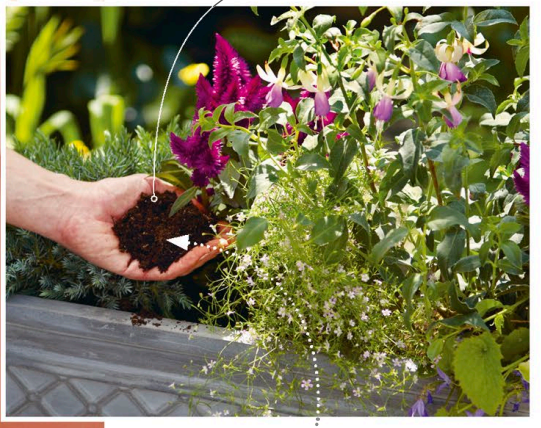


1 If necessary, make holes in the base of the container for drainage and cover the base with a light layer of gravel. Then add a layer of compost mixed with a slow-release fertilizer to give your new plants a head start.

Place upright plants in the middle and back rows of the box

2 Slide the plants from their containers and set them on the compost surface. Ensure that the top of the compost is 2.5cm (1in) below the rim of the box to allow for watering.

Don't add too much compost as it will spill over during watering



3 Fill around the plants with compost and firm it down. Put the box in position, then water well. Continue to water frequently throughout summer while the plants are in full growth. Cut off blooms as they fade, to prolong flowering.

PLANTING BULBS **IN A POT**

Bulbs are easy to plant and grow well in a pot. A planting of mixed spring bulbs will give quick and colourful results. If you choose bulbs that flower at different times, the display will last for longer.

YOU WILL NEED

- bulbs, eg tulips, daffodils, crocuses
- deep container
- broken pots or tiles
- gravel
- bulb or multi-purpose compost
- horticultural grit

SEE ALSO

- **CHOOSING COMPOST** >> 18/19
- **PREPARING POTS** >> 34/35
- **CHOOSING FLOWERS** >> 54/57

MORE FLOWERS

Choose some winter-flowering bedding plants to add on top of the bulbs in your pot. These will remain in flower as the bulbs are starting to push through the soil, then in spring the bulbs will become the main feature.

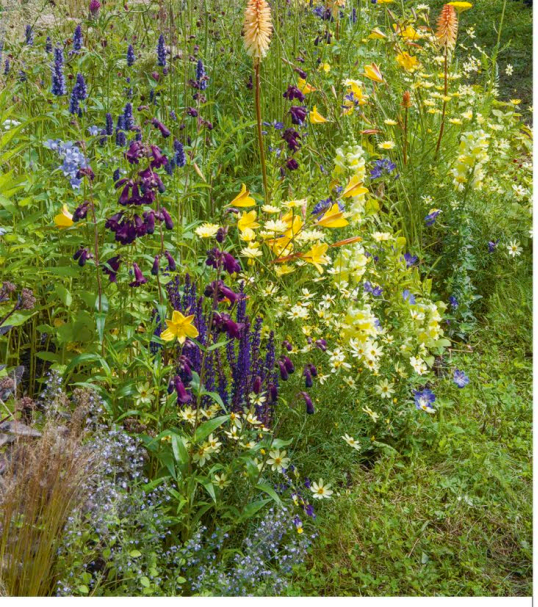
1 Choose a container with good drainage holes and then cover them with broken pots or tiles. These prevent the holes from getting clogged up with compost, which would stop water from draining away.

2 Some sun-loving bulbs, such as tulips, require really good drainage as they need to be kept fairly dry when dormant, and may rot if too wet. When planting these, add a layer of gravel to aid drainage further.

Grit helps ensure the bulbs are not sitting in moist soil

3 Fill the pot with bulb or multi-purpose compost to within 15cm (6in) of the rim. If using multi-purpose compost, improve its drainage by mixing in one part horticultural grit to every three parts of compost.

4 As a rule, bulbs should be planted at three times their own depth. Make sure the pointed shoot is facing upwards. Then top up the pot with compost to within 5cm (2in) of the rim, to allow for easy watering.



MAKING A **BORDER**

Flower and shrub borders provide colour, scent, and seasonal interest, making them an essential part of the garden. Follow these basic steps when planning and preparing your borders to ensure their success through the year.

YOU WILL NEED

- half-moon turf cutter
- garden hose (for a curved border)
- spade and fork
- soil rake
- well-rotted farmyard manure or garden compost
- horticultural grit or gravel
- wheelbarrow

SEE ALSO

- **RAISED BEDS AND EDGES** >> 50/53
- **CHOOSING FLOWERS** >> 54/57
- **CHOOSING SHRUBS** >> 140/143

LEFTOVER TURF

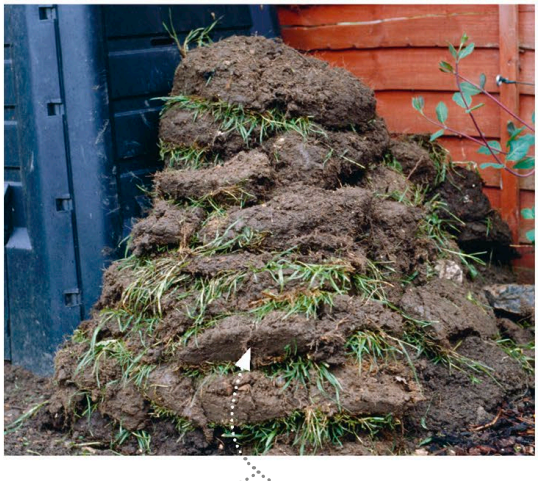
Leftover turves of grass (see step 4) make excellent compost, once the remaining grass has died off.

Alternatively, leave turves in a corner of the garden for wildlife such as mining bees to nest.

1 Decide where in the garden you want your border and mark out its shape. For a curved edge, use a garden hose. Make sure the border is not too narrow and that its shape suits the garden.

2 Using a half-moon turf cutter or a small spade, carefully slice through the grass, following the contours of the hose. Make sure the cuts join up properly, and push the full depth of the cutter into the ground.

3 With a spade, begin stripping off the turf. Cut it into manageable-sized squares from above, then slide the blade of the spade under the roots of the grass. Try to avoid removing an excessively deep layer of soil.



4 Stack the turves in a spare corner of the garden, grass-side down. The soil in these turves is nutrient-rich and should be reused. After several months the grass will die off, and the pile can be cut up, sieved, and dug into the borders.

CONTINUED ▷

5 Dig over the exposed soil with a fork, pushing the sharp prongs down to their full depth. Remove old roots, large stones, and debris that you unearth, and break up large clods of soil. Work the soil until it has a crumbly texture.

6 With a spade, spread about 5cm (2in) of organic matter, such as well-rotted farmyard manure or garden compost, over the surface of the border. Turn the organic matter into the soil, and mix it in evenly.

7 If the soil is heavy or poorly drained, spread an 8cm (3in) layer of coarse grit or gravel over it, and dig this into the top 15cm (6in) of soil with a spade. This will help to open up drainage channels through the soil in the root zone.

8 Using a soil rake, remove any remaining stones, roots, or debris that may have worked their way up to the surface. Then, with the flat back of the rake, carefully level off any mounds and hollows.

Work the ground during spring or autumn when it is not too cold, hard, or wet

9 Set out the plants, still in their pots, on the ground, adjusting their positions until you are happy with them. Pay attention to their eventual size, flower and foliage colour, and season of interest to achieve your desired effect.

Keep plant labels as a reminder of what you have planted

Dahlias are excellent garden plants, giving a long-lasting late-summer display in the border or in containers. They come in an astonishing range of colours and shapes and make beautiful cut flowers.

MAKING RAISED **BEDS AND EDGES**

A sturdy timber-framed raised bed is quick and easy to construct, especially if the pieces are pre-cut to length at a timberyard. If your bed is adjacent to a lawn, finish it off neatly with a simple brick mowing edge.

YOU WILL NEED

- timber, eg softwood sleepers or reclaimed hardwood
- builder's spirit level, or plank of wood and short spirit level
- measuring tape
- rubber mallet and small trowel
- electric drill and coach screws
- bricks, rubble, and mortar mix

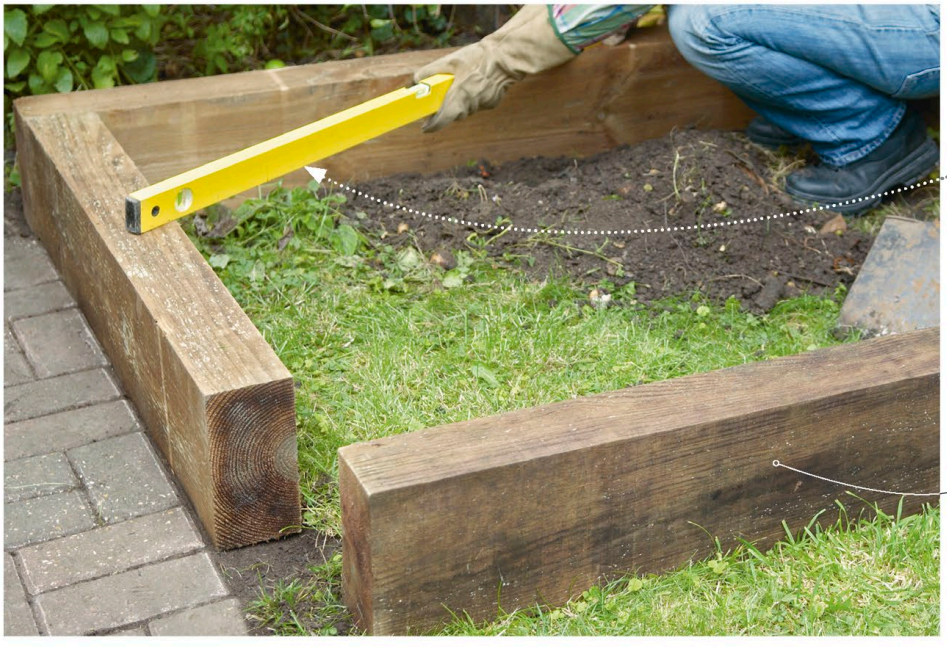
SEE ALSO

- **MAKING A BORDER** >> 44/47
- **LAWN EDGING** >> 64/65

WHAT TO PLANT IN A RAISED BED

Raised beds can be used to plant aromatic herb gardens, mini fruit and vegetable patches, or simply for your favourite flowers. On clay soils, a raised bed will give improved drainage.

1 Dig out strips of turf wide enough to accommodate the timbers. Pressure-treated, softwood sleepers are an economical alternative to rot-resistant hardwoods like oak. You could also consider buying reclaimed hardwood.



2 Lay the timbers out in position and check that they are level using a builder's spirit level, or a plank of wood supporting a shorter spirit level. Check the levels diagonally between timbers, as well as along their length.

Treat wood with a preservative, if not already treated, to prolong its life outdoors

Position timber planks flush to one another

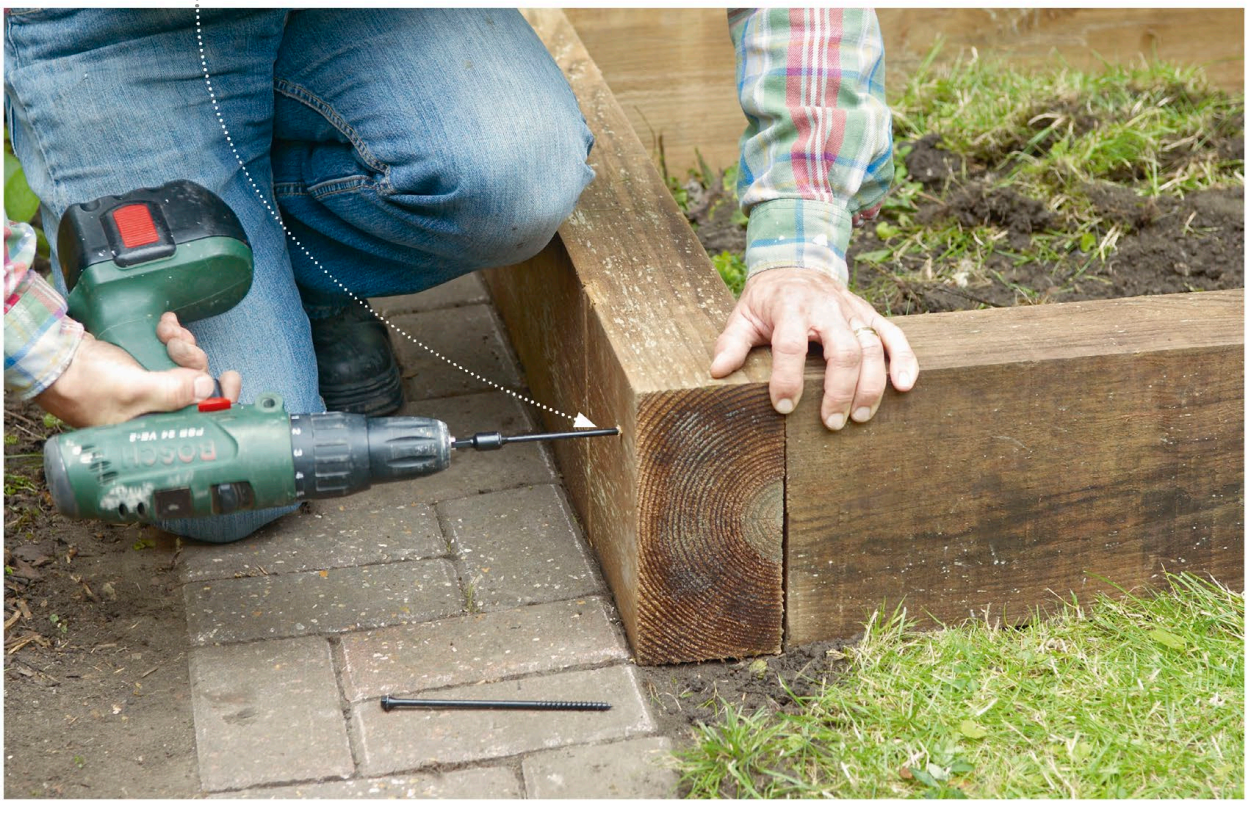
3 Ensure the base is square by checking that the diagonals are equal in length. For a perfect square or rectangular bed, it is a good idea to have the timbers pre-cut to size at a local timberyard.

CONTINUED ▷

4 Using a rubber mallet, gently tap the wood so that it butts up against the adjacent piece; it should stand perfectly level and upright according to the readings on your spirit level.

Remove soil as necessary, to ensure the wood is level

5 Drill through the end timbers into the adjacent pieces at both the top and bottom to accommodate a couple of long, heavy-duty coach screws. Screw firmly into position, securing the base ready for the next level to be built.



6 Arrange the next set of timbers, making sure that these overlap the joints below to give the structure added strength. Check with a spirit level before screwing in the final set of fixings, as for step 5.

Remove any weeds from the plot

7 For the extra drainage required by tender plants, such as Mediterranean herbs, or alpines, part fill the base with builder's rubble or chippings. Then add sieved topsoil that is guaranteed free from stubborn weeds.

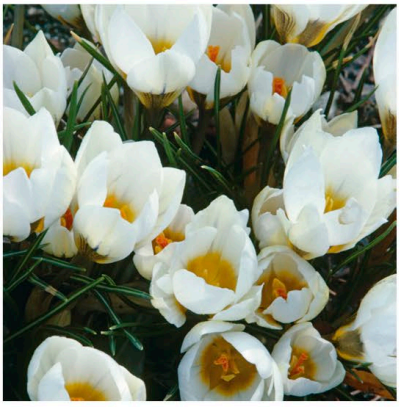
CHOOSING FLOWERS AND FOLIAGE **FOR SPRING CONTAINERS**

For a spring display, plan ahead and plant up your containers in autumn. The plants selected here offer a range of shapes, sizes, and colours to combine. Some, such as the elephant's ears and heuchera, provide attractive winter foliage before the bulbs and other flowers burst into life.

ELEPHANT'S EARS

***Bergenia* 'Silberlicht'**

Grow this evergreen perennial with spring bulbs in containers of soil-based compost. It has large, oval, dark green leaves, which create a foil for the clusters of white flowers that appear on its red-tinged stems. It reaches about 45cm (18in) tall and its leaves spread slightly wider. It thrives in sun or partial shade, and likes moist compost.



CROCUS

***Crocus* 'Snow Bunting'**

Plant this corm (similar to a bulb) in small pots in autumn for an early spring display. 'Snow Bunting' has fragrant white flowers, with yellow centres and a purple blush on the outer petal surfaces. Its grass-like leaves are green with white lines. It likes a sunny spot in moist compost, and grows to 7cm (3in).

HEUCHERA

***Heuchera villosa* 'Palace Purple'**

This evergreen perennial has large, lobed, glossy, purple foliage, providing year-round interest. In a pot, its leaves are a foil for spring flowers, while in summer it produces small white flowers on wiry stems. Plant it in pots of soil-based compost and place it in a sunny spot, keeping it well watered. It can grow to 45cm (18in).

GRAPE HYACINTH

Muscari armeniacum

Plant this spring bulb in autumn with daffodils and early tulips in pots of soil-based compost. The small, fragrant, deep blue flowers, held in cone-shaped clusters, are accompanied by grassy green leaves. It likes a sunny or partially shaded spot and well-drained soil, so avoid overwatering or ensure the pot drains effectively. It grows to 20cm (8in).

DAFFODIL

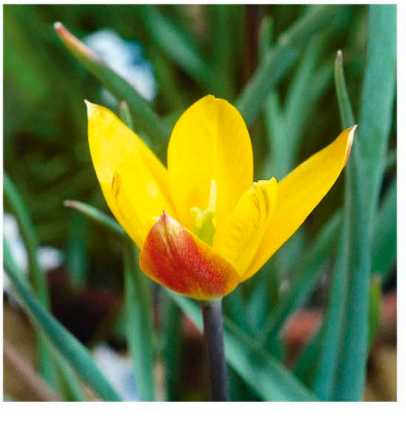
***Narcissus* 'Jack Snipe'**

Try combining this early to mid-spring-flowering bulb with grape hyacinth or polyanthus. It grows to about 23cm (9in) tall, producing creamy white flowers with short, bright yellow cups and narrow, dark green leaves. Plant in autumn in a container of soil-based compost and set it in sun or partial shade.

ANGLED SOLOMON'S SEAL

Polygonatum odoratum

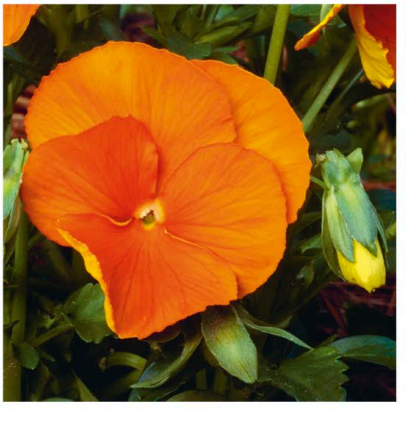
This perennial has oval to lance-shaped, mid-green leaves on arching stems and, in late spring to early summer, fragrant, hanging, bell-shaped, green-tipped white flowers. Plant it in containers in autumn for spring colour and fresh, substantial foliage. It can grow to 60cm (24in), and thrives in partial shade and when kept moist. Cut back in autumn.



TULIP

Tulipa clusiana* var. *chrysantha

Blooming from early spring, this tulip makes a dainty feature in pots or troughs of well-drained, gritty, soil-based compost. It bears small, bowl-shaped, yellow blooms, tinged red on the outside. Plant the bulbs in autumn, perhaps combined with blue hyacinths or scillas. It likes a sunny spot and and may reach 30cm (12in).



PANSY

Viola* x *wittrockiana

This valuable short-lived plant has oval leaves and from late winter to spring produces flowers in almost every shade imaginable, providing a colourful frill around pots of spring bulbs. Plant it in containers of soil-based or multi-purpose compost in a sunny spot where it will bloom for many weeks before and while the bulbs flower. It reaches 20cm (8in).

CHOOSING FLOWERS AND FOLIAGE **FOR SUMMER CONTAINERS**

If you spend time relaxing in your garden in summer, beautiful containers will give you a great deal of pleasure. A slow-release fertilizer mixed in at planting, combined with frequent watering and regular removal of fading blooms, will keep plants growing well for most of the summer.

SICILIAN CHAMOMILE

Anthemis punctata* subsp. *cupaniana

This evergreen, spreading perennial has silvery leaves and masses of daisy-like summer blooms. Plant in a soil-based compost along with short-lived, colourful plants in mixed planters. Deadhead regularly to keep the flowers coming. It grows to 30cm (12in) and loves a sunny situation.

FERN-LEAVED BEGGAR-TICKS

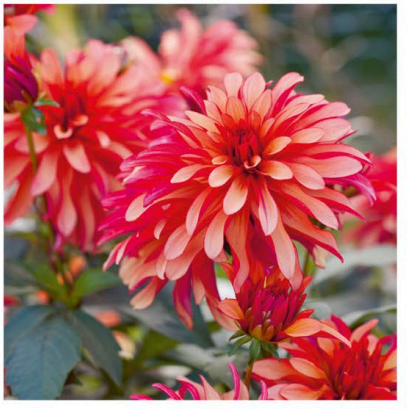
Bidens ferulifolia

This annual plant's trailing stems of ferny green foliage and star-shaped, yellow flowers are perfect for edging tall pots or hanging baskets from summer to autumn. Grow it in multi-purpose compost with pelargoniums or dwarf zinnias. It needs full sun and withstands drought well. It may grow to 30cm (12in) and spreads indefinitely.

COSMOS

Cosmos bipinnatus

Large, daisy-like flowers in pink, red, and white make this short-lived plant a favourite for summer containers. The blooms are set off by soft, feathery foliage. Plant it in pots of multi-purpose compost, and deadhead to prolong flowering. Reaching a height of up to 1.2m (4ft), it needs a fairly large container and full sun.



DAHLIA

***Dahlia* 'Gallery Art Deco'**

This decorative dahlia, which has double flowers with burgundy-edged pale orange petals, offers a splash of colour in containers from midsummer to autumn. Grow it in multi-multi-purpose compost, and store the tubers in frost-free conditions over the winter. This plant likes a sheltered position in full sun and grows to 45cm (18in) tall.

HOSTA

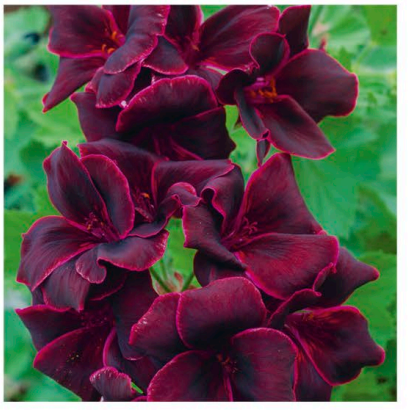
***Hosta* 'Francee'**

A showy perennial, 'Francee' has puckered green leaves, white-splashed around the edges, and pale blue summer flowers. It makes a great feature in a container in partial shade. Top the container with a gravel mulch to set off the leaves and retain moisture. Water well and shelter from damaging winds. This plant grows up to 0.5–1m (2–3ft).

HONEYBUSH

Melianthus major

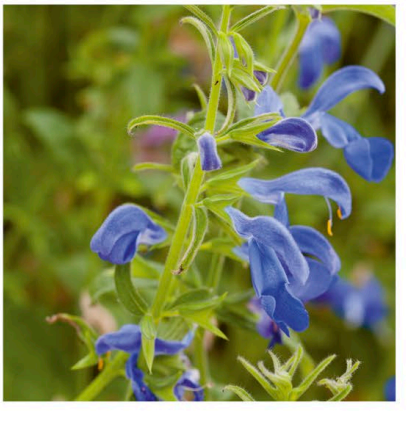
One of the best architectural plants, the honeybush has large, toothed, grey-green leaves. Plant it in a large container to provide a backdrop of green foliage. It will grow up to 1.2m (4ft) and likes to be kept moist. Provide sun and shelter; the latter is crucial in winter when the top-growth dies back. If severe frosts threaten, provide protective cover.



PELARGONIUM

***Pelargonium* 'Lord Bute'**

An evergreen perennial plant if protected from frost, 'Lord Bute' is usually grown as an annual. It has deep purple-red blooms throughout summer, set against rounded, hairy leaves. There are many other varieties to grow and all are ideal for windowboxes and pots. Plant in multi-purpose compost. It grows to about 45cm (18in).



SALVIA

***Salvia patens* 'Patio Deep Blue'**

The flowers of this rich, blue perennial have an open mouth and are borne on tall spikes, reaching about 60cm (24in). It thrives in full sun and makes an elegant addtion to a pot. Give it a sheltered location, water and feed it well, and deadhead it to prolong flowering. Protect it over winter.

LAWNS

LAYING **TURF**

The beauty of laying turf is that it produces an instant lawn. It can be laid at most times of the year, but will need regular watering during spring and summer. Although it is more expensive than seed, it can be walked on only a few days after laying.

YOU WILL NEED

- lawn turf – make sure you buy enough rolls to fill the size of your lawn
- wooden plank
- garden broom
- garden rake
- top-dressing soil
- watering can or hose with fine sprayhead attachment

SEE ALSO

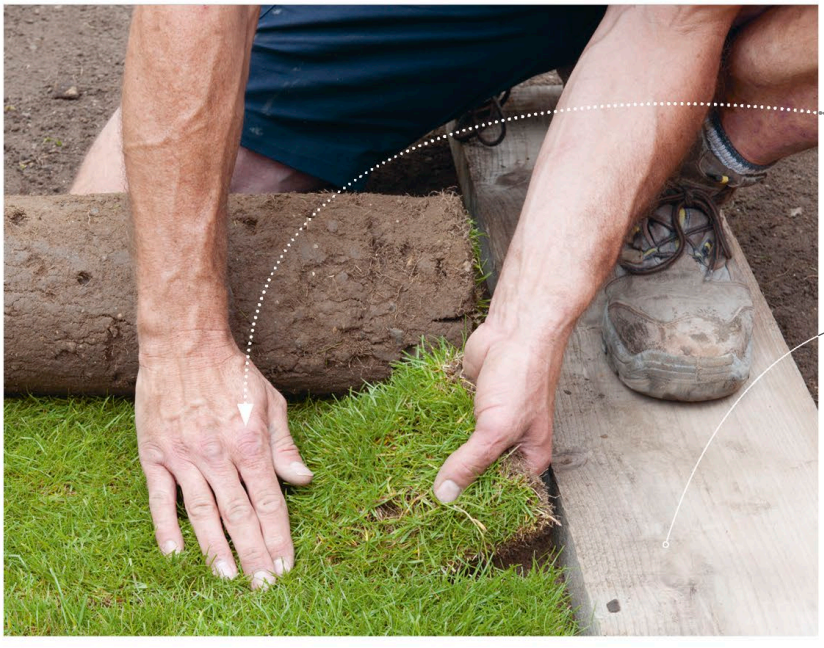
- **SOWING GRASS SEED** >> 62/63
- **LAWN EDGING** >> 64/65
- **LAWN CARE** >> 70/73

GETTING THE BEST FROM TURF

Buy turf only from a reputable garden centre or supplier and lay it on the day of delivery. If left stacked it can dry out and the grass will not receive enough light so it turns yellow.

A straight, neat path edge makes it easier to later trim the turf

1 Prepare the site thoroughly by weeding and raking, and ensure that the soil is level. Roll the turf out and, once it is in place, firmly press down with the back of a rake. If possible, lay the first row of turf along a straight edge such as a path.



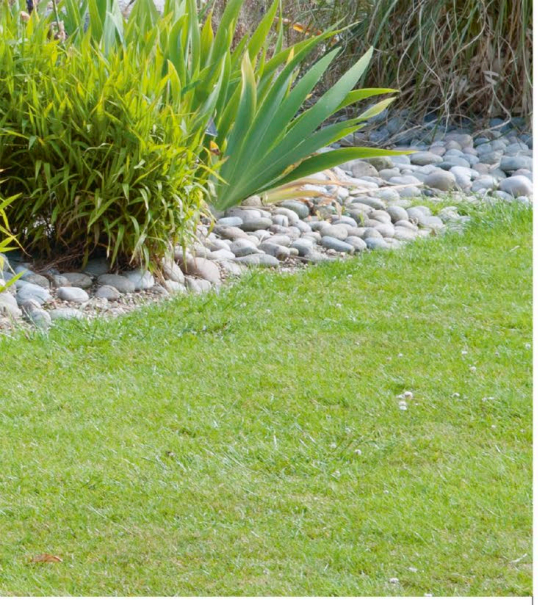
2 Ensure the edges of all the turves are butted up close to each other and pressed down firmly to prevent them from drying out. The joints of each row should be staggered, a bit like brickwork, as this creates a more sturdy lawn.

Stand on a wooden plank to avoid damaging newly laid turf

3 Once the lawn is finished, use a stiff broom to brush a good-quality, top-dressing soil into any cracks. No top-dressing soil should be left on the surface.

Top-dressing soil helps to smooth out the surface of the lawn

4 Finally, give the lawn a good watering. Do this frequently over the next few days to draw the roots down into the soil and to help it establish. Once the lawn starts to root it can have its first cut at the mower's maximum height.



SOWING **GRASS SEED**

By far the cheapest method of creating a lawn is sowing it from seed. The best time to sow is in spring or early autumn. Seed can be sown in the summer but will need watering regularly; in winter, temperatures are usually too cold for the seed to germinate.

YOU WILL NEED

- grass seed
- canes and/or string
- garden fork
- garden rake
- seed spreader (optional)
- plastic sheet
- watering can or hose with fine sprayhead

SEE ALSO

- **LAYING TURF** >> 60/61
- **LAWN EDGING** >> 64/65
- **LAWN CARE** >> 70/73

JARGON BUSTER

Germination is the process by which a seed starts to develop into a new young plant. For germination to happen, certain conditions need to be right, which vary according to the type of seed.

In simple terms, a seed needs the right temperature and some moisture to sprout and grow.

Weed, level, and rake the soil before sowing

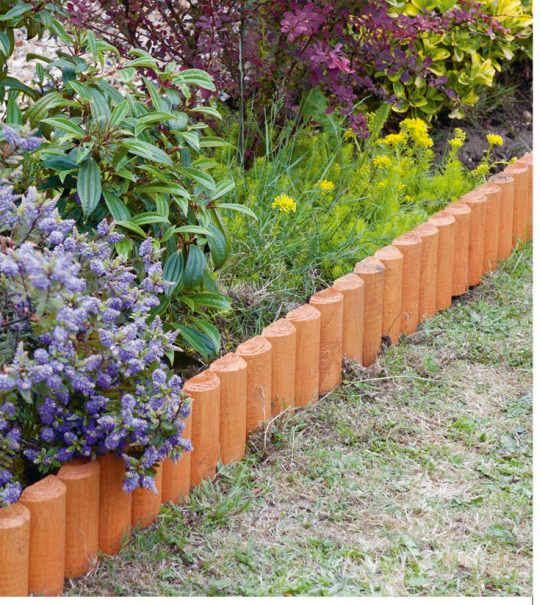
1 Prepare the area to be sown and then divide it up into 1m (3ft) squares using canes or string. Measure out the amount of seed required per square metre as per the supplier's instructions.

2 Sow the measured seed by hand. Half of the seed should be spread in one direction and the other half at 90 degrees to this. Ensure that the seed is distributed as evenly as possible for the best results.

3 Rake the seed in gently. It should ideally be covered by 1–2mm (1/16in) of soil, although it can start to grow on the surface. Water using a can or hose with a fine sprayhead. Grass will start to emerge in one to two weeks.

Lay a sheet to get neat edges

An alternative to hand sowing is to use a seed spreader, which is ideal if you have a large area of ground to cover. It will need to be calibrated to your walking speed so that it distributes seed at the correct rate.



HOW TO MAKE A **LAWN EDGING**

It isn't essential to use edging around a lawn, but it does make a neater, more distinctive feature of both grass and border and reduces the chore of keeping the edges tidy.

YOU WILL NEED

- wooden edging
- half-moon cutter
- garden string
- hammer or rubber mallet
- spare piece of wood

SEE ALSO

- **RAISED BEDS AND EDGES** >> 50/53
- **MAKING A BORDER** >> 44/47

TREAT WOODEN EDGING

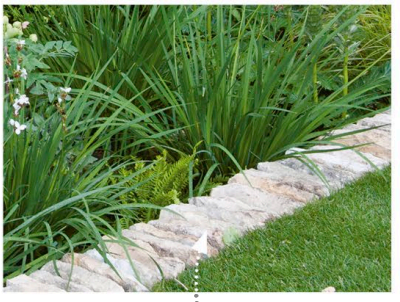
Wooden edging should be painted or treated with a wood preservative to prevent it rotting. Do this 24 hours prior to inserting the edging panels into the ground.

Mow the lawn, if needed, before you start, to make the job easier

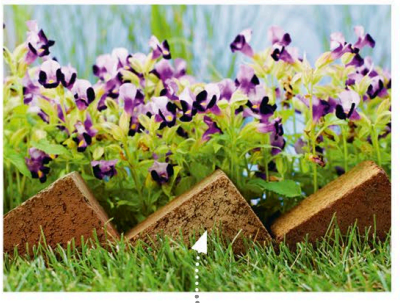
1 Peg a line of string taut along the desired edge and use a half-moon cutter to create a groove in the turf to a depth of about 7cm (3in). Remove any excess turf and push back some of the soil so it will be easier to insert the edging.

2 Place the sections of wooden edging over the groove and lightly tap them down using a hammer or rubber mallet. Place a piece of wood between the hammer and the edging to avoid damaging it.

ALTERNATIVES



Wide brick edge Laid flat, bricks give a smart finish to a lawn. When laid beneath the level of the turf, they make an ideal mowing edge.



Brick diamonds In brick diamond edging, bricks are laid diagonally with about half of the brick in the soil and the remainder above ground.

Victorian-style stone This style of edging looks good in the gardens of Victorian town houses where it will complement the architecture.

Providing a restful green area or perhaps a play space, a lawn is often an integral part of a garden. Its shape will reflect the design of the garden, with formal lines or sweeping curves.

GROWING BULBS **IN GRASS**

Bulbs create a spectacular splash of colour on the lawn. Most bulbs, including crocuses and scillas, are planted in the autumn to bloom in spring, but with careful planning you can grow flowers in the lawn all year round.

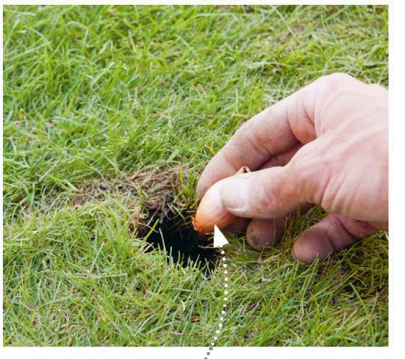
YOU WILL NEED

- bulbs, eg daffodil or anemone
- bulb planter
- half-moon turf cutter or spade
- grit or sand
- garden rake
- watering can or hose with fine sprayhead

SEE ALSO

- **LAYING TURF** >> 60/61
- **SOWING GRASS SEED** >> 62/63
- **LAWN CARE** >> 70/73

1 To make the planting look natural, scatter the bulbs across the lawn and plant them where they land. Use a bulb planter to take out a core of soil; bulbs should be planted at two to three times their depth.



2 If the soil is poorly drained, grit or sand can be added. Place the bulb in the bottom of the hole with its growing tip facing upwards. After planting, backfill the hole with soil and replace the plug of turf.

DEADHEAD FLOWERS

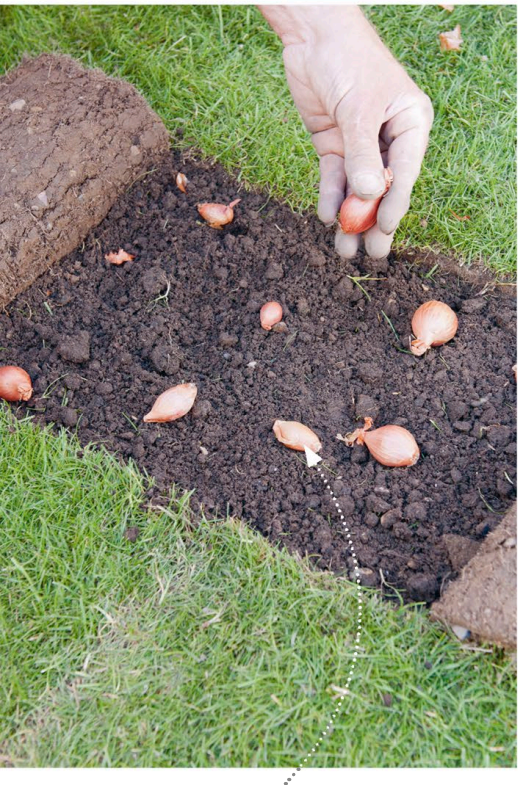
Deadhead after flowering and leave for a few weeks until the foliage has died back, allowing nutrients to return to the bulb. Mow the faded foliage and give the lawn a light rolling to level it.

ALTERNATIVES

If you don't have a bulb planter, there is an alternative method of planting bulbs using a half-moon turf cutter or a spade. This is also a useful and quick technique to use if there are a lot of bulbs to plant, or if they are small and need to be planted close together.

1 Use a half-moon turf cutter or a spade to cut a square shape and then slice under the turf horizontally. Carefully peel the flaps of turf back. Lightly loosen the soil in the hole and add grit or sand if the soil is poorly drained.

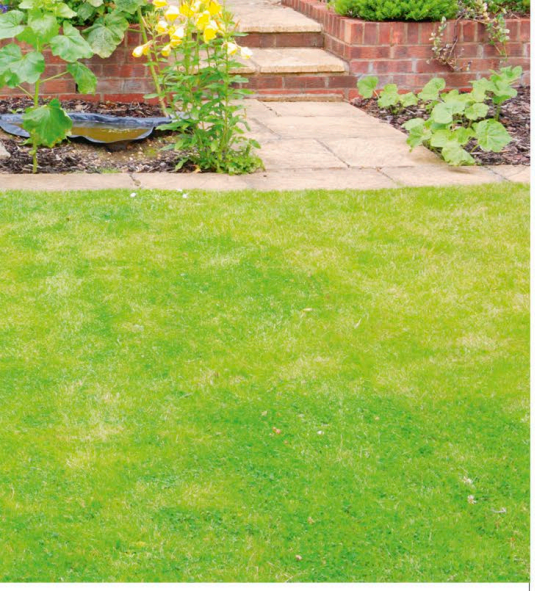
Avoid breaking up turf when peeling it back



2 Scatter the bulbs on the soil, ensuring that their placement looks natural. Plant them at the required depth, which is usually two to three times their height, with their growing tips facing upwards.

Bulbs will push through the turf as they grow

3 Once the bulbs are planted, roll the turf back into place and make sure that they are completely covered. Firm the turf down well with the back of a rake, checking that the area is level with the rest of the lawn. Water in well.



CARING FOR YOUR **LAWN**

Most lawns require little maintenance besides regular mowing, but to keep a lawn looking really good, it will need occasional attention. Tasks such as feeding and scarifying will ensure that the grass stays healthy and lush.

KEY POINTS

- **In spring** the grass starts to grow as temperatures rise. Give a spring feed, and scarify lightly. Start to cut the lawn at a high level.
- **Summer** calls for regular mowing, and for watering only if needed.
- **Autumn care** ensures the lawn survives the cold of winter. Feed, top-dress, scarify, and aerate it.

SEE ALSO

- **LAYING TURF** >> 60/61
- **SOWING GRASS SEED** >> 62/63
- **MAKE COMPOST** >> 234/235

WATER WISELY

Lawns only really need watering in extremely dry conditions. A well-maintained lawn will recover quickly after a period of drought. If you must water, then do so in the early morning or evening to reduce evaporation.

Feeding The three vital ingredients in a mineral fertilizer for your lawn are nitrogen (N), phosphorus (P), and potassium (K). Nitrogen promotes rapid leafy growth and is found in high quantities in spring feeds. Phosphorus promotes root growth, and potassium toughens up the grass; autumn feeds often contain high levels of both. Feed at the rate recommended on the packet in spring and autumn. You can also feed before sowing (shown here).

Watering In order to save time, large lawns are best irrigated with sprinklers, which can be timer-controlled to prevent water waste. There are various types available including oscillating sprinklers (shown here), which spray from side to side, and rotary arm sprinklers that spray the full 360 degrees. If you have a small lawn, you may want to use a hand-held hosepipe with a spray attachment. Watering is essential when a lawn is newly laid or sown.

Mowing Regular mowing encourages healthy new growth and a strong root system. It also deters weeds from seeding in the lawn. Different types of mower are available, with rotary or cylinder blades, and some collect grass clippings as they go. Mowers can be petrol driven, run on batteries, or push-propelled. They can be set to cut the lawn at different heights.

Weeding A few weeds are acceptable in a lawn, especially if they attract bees and butterflies. However, it is important to tackle those such as buttercups and dandelions that might take over a lawn or self-seed into borders. Weed by hand, prising out the roots of persistent weeds.

CONTINUED ▷

Scarifying Use a spring-tine rake to rip the "thatch" out of a lawn – the build-up of dead grass and clippings that can start to smother a lawn if left unchecked. Scarify lightly in spring, and much more vigorously in autumn. The best method in autumn is to scarify in one direction and then again at right angles. The lawn can look much thinner afterwards, but more light and air can now circulate among the grass. Compost the removed thatch.

Aerating Every spring and autumn aim to aerate the lawn to relieve compaction. Spike the lawn at 10cm (4in) intervals with a fork pushed down to about 8–10cm (3–4 in), wiggling the fork back and forth slightly to widen the holes.

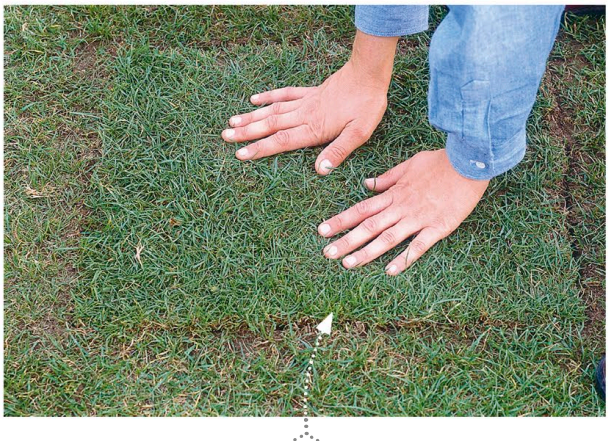
Top-dressing will fill the holes created by aerating

Spread top-dressing evenly.

Brush in the top-dressing well so that it does not smother the grass

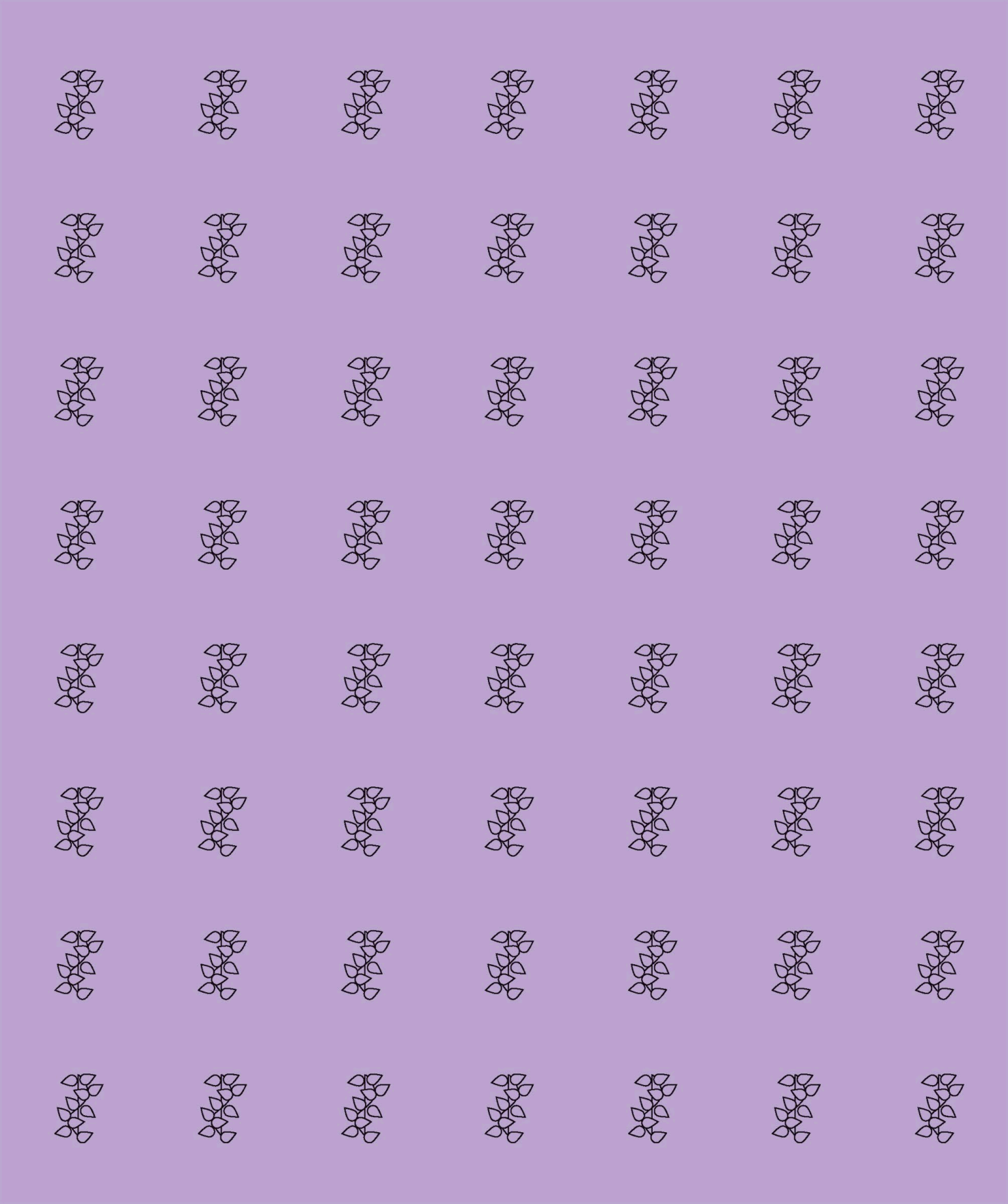
Brush into the lawn surface.

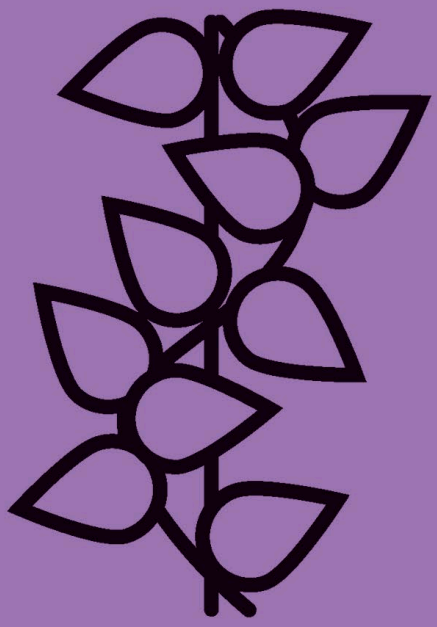
Top-dressing Applying top-dressing to your lawn improves the quality of the soil, levels out surface bumps and hollows, and fills the holes created by aeration. Ready-made mixes are available but you can make your own using sand, loam, and organic matter at a ratio of 3:3:1. Spread the top-dressing evenly across the lawn and then brush it into aeration holes using a broom. Ideally you should top-dress your lawn annually in autumn.



Replacing a square of turf If a small area is damaged, cut out a square around the damaged part, lift it out with a spade, and dig over the base of the hole. Insert a square of turf the same size, pressing it down with the back of a rake. Water in well until it is established.

Raking leaves Use a spring-tine rake to collect leaves into piles. If left, the leaves will damage the lawn grass by depriving it of light. The gathered leaves can be shredded with a lawn mower and then put on the compost heap or made into a pile to become leafmould.





CLIMBERS

PLANTING A **CLIMBER**

Climbing plants are particularly useful in small gardens because they add height and interest without taking up too much precious space. They are also a quick and effective way of covering dull walls and fences, and many have pretty foliage and flowers.

YOU WILL NEED

- climbing plants, eg clematis, wisteria, honeysuckle, or jasmine
- garden compost
- bark chippings
- canes
- twine
- spade
- trowel
- watering can

SEE ALSO

- **TOWER OF CLIMBERS** >> 82/83
- **CHOOSING CLIMBERS** >> 104/107

USING VINE EYES

A system of vine eyes (a type of screw) threaded with wire along a fence is the simplest and least visible way of providing support for climbers. The system is easy to attach and allows plants to grow to their full potential.

1 Dig a hole twice the diameter of the root ball of the plant, 30–40cm (12–16in) from the fence. To support the stems and achieve good initial coverage, construct a fan from canes pushed into the soil and angled towards the fence.

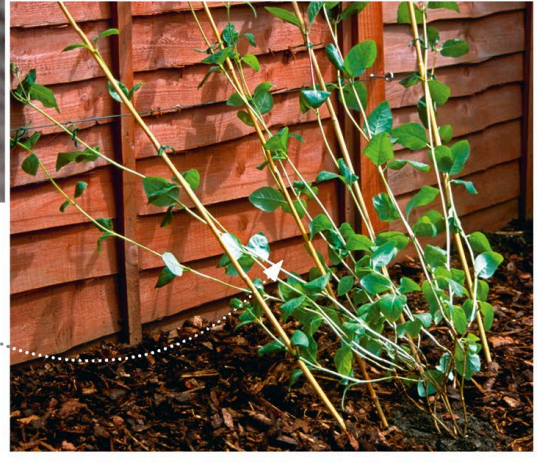
The hole should be just deep enough to fit the root ball of the plant

2 Make sure the plant is well watered, then position it in the hole at an angle pointing towards the fence. Carefully remove the pot and any supporting stakes. Untangle stems growing from the base (in this case a honeysuckle).

3 Backfill the hole with the removed soil mixed with some organic matter, such as garden compost. Firm the soil gently as you go. The ground around the plant should be slightly sunken to aid watering and to help the plant develop well.

Avoid stems tangling too much around each other

4 Select the stems to be trained up the canes, tying in one to two stems per cane with twine. Spread a layer of bark chippings or other organic matter, such as more compost, over the soil to keep in the moisture and suppress weeds.



POTTING UP **CLIMBERS**

Well suited to growing in pots, all climbers need is a firm support and plenty of time to settle in. A feature can be made of the support – one that is elegant or attractively made will add to the display.

YOU WILL NEED

- a large pot or container
- wooden trellis support
- climbing plant, eg climbing rose
- broken pots or polystyrene pieces
- loam-based compost
- twine
- small-stoned gravel
- hose or watering can with a fine sprayhead

SEE ALSO

- **TOWER OF CLIMBERS** >>82/83
- **CHOOSING CLIMBERS**>> 104/107

JARGON BUSTER

A **trellis support** is a simple flat framework of vertical supports with horizontal cross pieces, and is usually made of wood or metal. It can be plain or highly decorative.

You can make a trellis yourself or buy one from the garden centre.

Make sure the trellis leaves enough room for the plant roots to spread out

1 Add a layer of loam-based compost, and then position the trellis support towards the back of the container, as shown above. To reduce the weight of the container, chunks of polystyrene can be added first, before the compost.

2 Part-fill the pot with more compost and sit the climber on top, to check that it will be at the correct level once planted. Remove the plant from its pot and place it on top of the compost, with the stems angled towards the trellis.

3 Fill around the plant with compost and lightly firm it with your hand. Ensure there is a gap of 5cm (2in) from the soil to the rim of the pot. Then fan out the stems and tie each one to the support with soft garden twine.

4 Add a layer of gravel or stones around the plant on the surface of the compost for decoration and also to help keep the climber's roots moist. Then water the plant in well using a hose or watering can with a fine sprayhead.

PLANTING AN **OBELISK**

Adding instant height and structure to a garden, an obelisk is particularly welcome in a bed planted mainly with low- to medium-growing plants. It is also a lovely way to show off climbers.

YOU WILL NEED

- obelisk climbing frame
- climbing plant, eg climbing rose
- garden compost
- twine
- watering can
- low-growing plants for the base, eg geraniums (optional)

SEE ALSO

- **PLANTING CLIMBERS** >> 76/77
- **POTTING UP CLIMBERS** >> 78/79
- **CHOOSING CLIMBERS** >> 104/107

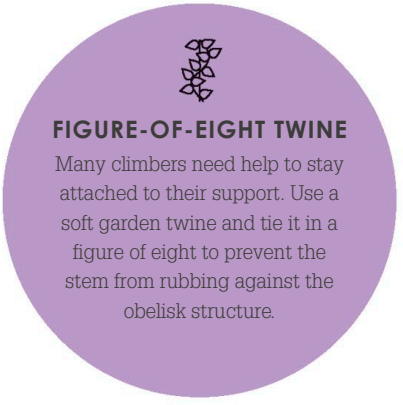
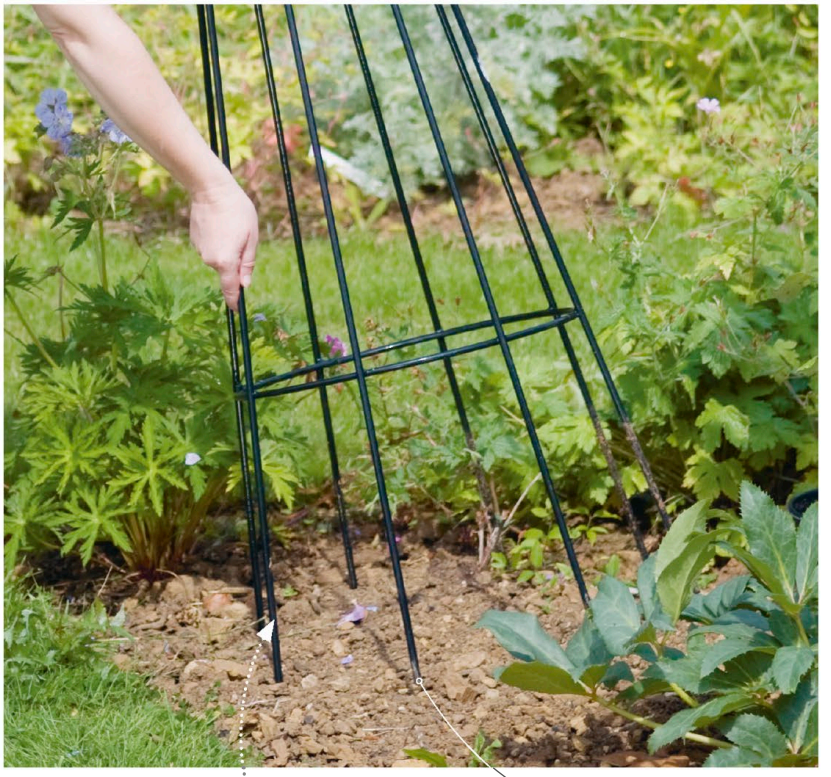


FIGURE-OF-EIGHT TWINE

Many climbers need help to stay attached to their support. Use a soft garden twine and tie it in a figure of eight to prevent the stem from rubbing against the obelisk structure.



1 Position your obelisk on an area of bare soil and push firmly into the ground. Placed on the corner of a bed it will be prominent and dramatic, while further back it creates height and therefore interest.

Any weeds should be removed before planting an obelisk

2 Dig a hole a short distance from the structure, larger than the plant's pot. Add compost to the base of the hole, then position the plant, leaning it inwards towards the obelisk. Backfill with soil, firm in place, and water in well.

3 Spread out the stems and tie them to the obelisk, but not too tightly. Most climbing plants will do the job of growing up the obelisk themselves. Watch at the start that stems don't stray, and later on prune or tie up wayward stems.

Plants that thrive in partial shade are a good choice for the base

4 To soften the impact of the new structure, plant around its base. You can mix bedding plants, which flower for a long time in spring and summer but then die off, with perennial plants, which flower for a shorter time but come back year after year.

CREATE A **TOWER OF CLIMBERS**

Some feature plants are best grown in pots where they are much easier to view and to care for, and you can stand them centre stage when they are at their best. These morning glories (*Ipomoea purpurea*) grow very quickly from seed sown in the spring.

YOU WILL NEED

- 8 morning glory seedlings
- canes, or old stems, such as stripped forsythia, and twigs
- garden string or raffia
- small trowel or spoon
- multi-purpose compost
- watering can

SEE ALSO

- **POTTING UP CLIMBERS** >> 78/79
- **PLANTING OBELISKS** >> 80/81
- **CHOOOSING CLIMBERS** >> 104/107

SUNNY CONDITIONS

Climbing morning glories come in many colours, including the intense, rich purple shown here. This tall plant likes sun, but can be damaged if the sun is too fierce; a spot with afternoon and evening sun is ideal.

Find old, hard tall stems or sticks for a wigwam

1 Arrange a wigwam of canes or old stems, such as stripped forsythia, around the edge of a container filled with potting compost. The wigwam doesn't need to be very neat – the stems will soon be obscured by the climbing plants.

2 Tie the tops of the stems together. Then wrap string or raffia around the canes, about halfway up, to strengthen it. After planting, add more at different heights to make it easier for the climbers to spread across the frame.

3 Make planting holes by each support with a trowel or spoon. Remove the seedlings carefully from their pots. Gently prise apart the plants, handling them by their leaves, not the delicate stems. Plant one in each hole.

4 Firm all the plants in the compost, then water well. You may find it necessary to add an extra circle of twigs to help train the climbers onto the canes, and to stop them climbing in the wrong direction.

MAKE AN **IVY TOPIARY BALL**

A simple project for your garden is to create an "instant" topiary sculpture using ivy and a purpose-made frame. Here, an "ivy lollipop" has been created in a large plant pot in just a few easy steps.

YOU WILL NEED

- 3 ivy plants
- 2 wire hanging baskets
- plastic-coated garden wire
- wooden pole 1.2m (4ft) long
- 2 short pieces of wood
- hammer and nails
- large container
- terracotta or polystyrene pieces
- multi-purpose compost

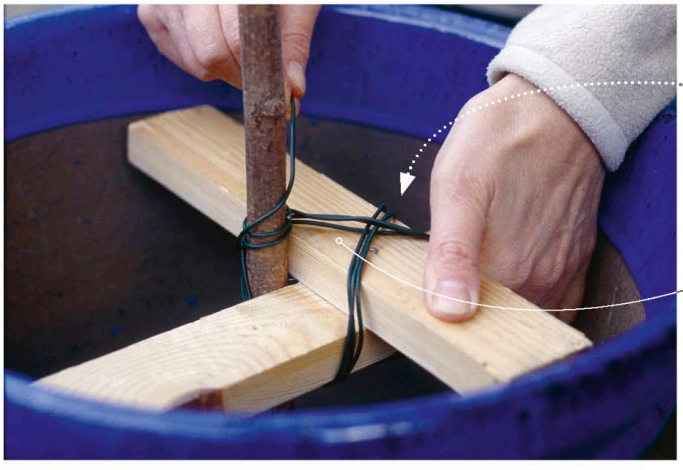
SEE ALSO

- **TOWER OF CLIMBERS** >> 82/83

1 Use plastic-coated garden wire to fasten two wire hanging baskets together to form the shape of a ball. Suspend the ball from a nail banged into a sturdy wooden pole 1.2m (4ft) long. Use more wire to hold it in position.

TOPIARY SHAPES

Buy different topiary shapes – such as topiary animals and tall abstract structures – from garden centres or online, or make them yourself for more interesting foliage in the garden.



2 Stand the pole with the attached "ball" in your chosen container and secure it with wire to a wooden, cross-shaped wedge fitted near the pot rim. Ensure the pole is kept perfectly vertical.

Nail two pieces of wood together as a cross and brace horizontally in the pot to support the stem

3 Place a layer of crocks or broken polystyrene pieces in the bottom of the pot and fill it up with multi-purpose compost. Plant three ivy plants around the central pole and water in well.

4 Help the ivy to climb by tying stems to the pole with garden twine. Once they reach the hanging basket ball, weave the stems in and out so that they cover the surface. Once established, trim regularly to maintain the shape.

Clematis are perfect for concealing less attractive features, such as a bare fence or wall or a shed, with their leaves and attractive blooms. They also add height and colour to your garden.

BUILD A **ROSE ARCH**

A garden arch is the perfect framework for your favourite climbing roses. Other flowering climbers can also be trained over it to extend and diversify the display, to allow their perfumes to intermingle, and to create a more beautiful focal point.

YOU WILL NEED

- rose arch kit and a climbing rose
- tape measure
- spirit level
- screws (preferably galvanized)
- electric screwdriver
- spade and fork
- hardcore and post-mix
- multi-purpose compost
- watering can

SEE ALSO

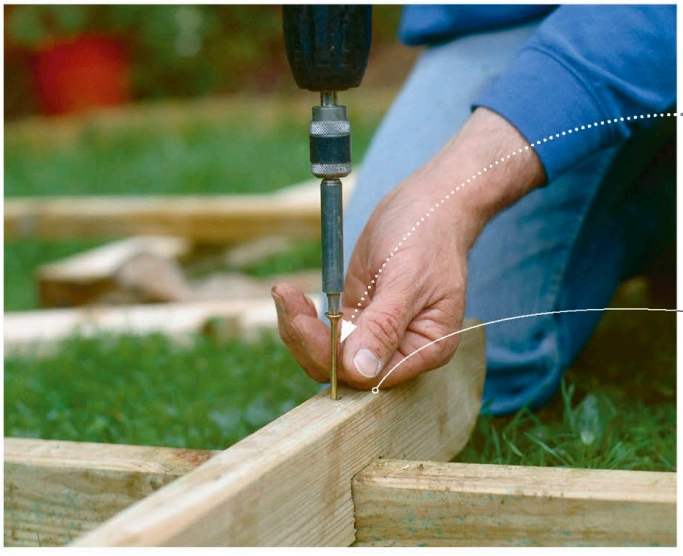
- **PRUNE A ROSE ARCH** >> 92/93
- **BARE-ROOT ROSE** >> 116/117

JARGON BUSTER

Hardcore is made of construction waste such as crushed rocks and gravel. It does not degrade easily and so makes a useful building base for outdoor structures.

Post-mix is pre-mixed concrete that sets rapidly for fixing wood, metal, and other structures in place.

1 Lay out the different pieces from the rose arch kit on the ground. Construct the top by aligning the five short cross pieces so that they slot into the two long cross beams. Use a tape measure to check they are evenly spaced.



2 Join the sections of the arch together using screws and an electric screwdriver. Galvanized screws are best for this because they do not rust, which ensures that your rose arch will last for many years to come.

Before drilling in screws, you can also pre-drill narrow holes to prevent wood splitting

You can buy hardcore online or from a builders' merchant

3 Stand the completed rose arch in its final position and mark out where the four uprights touch the soil. With a spade, dig four holes for the legs, 45cm (18in) deep and approximately 30cm (12in) in diameter.

4 Tip some hardcore rubble waste into each hole to make a solid base for the legs to stand on. A depth of about 5cm (2in) of hardcore will be sufficient. Tamp it down with a length of wood to make sure that it is level and firm.

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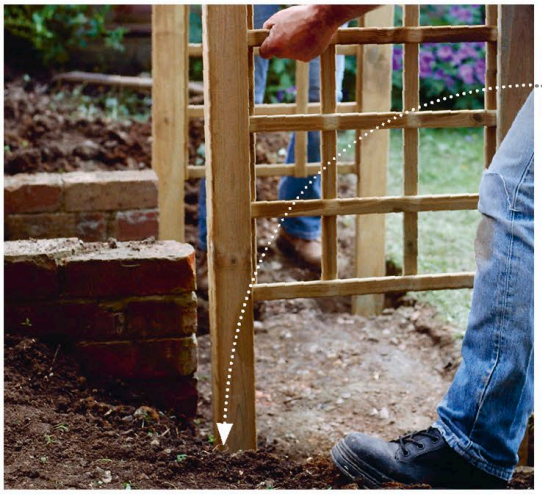
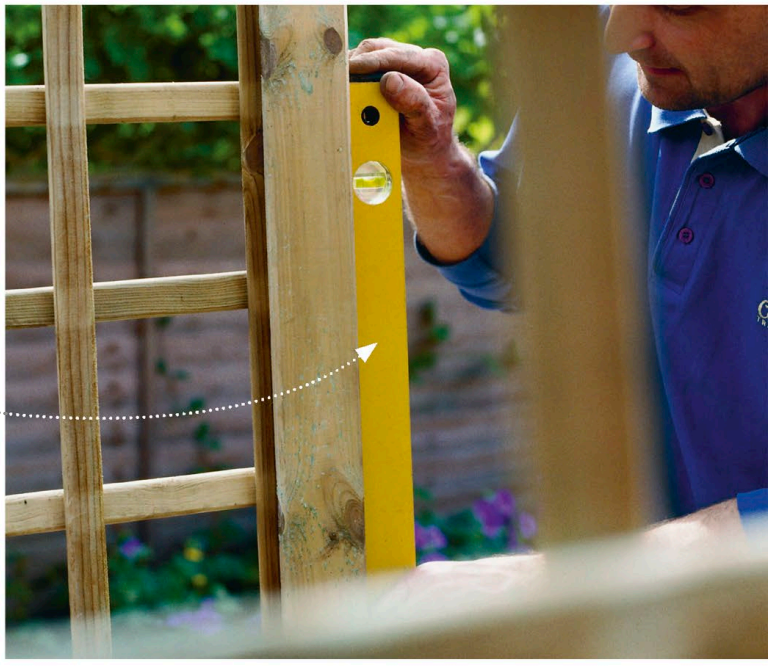


5 With help, lift the completed rose arch into place, lowering it into the holes. Make sure that each leg is standing on its hardcore base. Add or remove hardcore as needed until all legs are solidly supported.



6 Use a spirit level to make sure that all verticals are correctly aligned and that all horizontal pieces of the arch are level. If necessary, gently manoeuvre the structure until you are happy with its position.

7 To each hole, add some more hardcore and then ready-mixed post-mix to fill the hole up to ground level. Ensure that the post-mix completely surrounds the legs by pushing it into place with a gloved hand or a piece of wood.

8 Carefully add water to the holes so that the post-mix is completely soaked. You may have to come back to each hole in turn until sufficient water has been added. Allow the post-mix to set and harden.

Work on a dry, clear day to allow the foundations to properly set

9 When the post-mix has set hard, you are ready to plant some roses. Dig a hole 30cm (12in) away from the outside edge of one of the posts. Place your rose, still in its pot, into the hole and use a cane to check the planting depth.

Once the hole is filled, firmly press in soil with your feet

10 Mix some multi-purpose compost with the soil you have removed from the hole. Take the rose out of its pot and place it in the hole at 45 degrees to the arch. Plant it about 2.5cm (1in) deeper than the knobbly grafting point on the stem.

11 Fill in the planting hole with the compost and soil mix. It is important that there are no air gaps around the roots, so make sure the soil is crumbly with no lumps, and water in as you backfill, to prevent air pockets. Mulch with well-rotted manure.

PRUNING A **ROSE ARCH**

To enjoy a rose arch year after year, prune the long branches each autumn so that the plant does not overwhelm the support and so that passage through the arch remains unrestricted. Climbing roses respond well to pruning and will flower the following summer. Remember to wear gloves to protect against thorns.

YOU WILL NEED

- sharp secateurs
- loppers or a pruning saw
- wire staples and hammer
- plastic ties or twine
- thick garden gloves
- thick long-sleeved top

SEE ALSO

- **BUILD A ROSE ARCH** >> 88/91
- **PRUNE A ROSE WALL** >> 94/95
- **BARE-ROOT ROSE** >> 116/117

CLEAR AWAY THE OLD

On well-established roses older wood can become unproductive, failing to produce new shoots and flowers in the growing season. Removing some of this thicker wood will allow new growth to take over.

Unhealthy stems may appear peeling or cracked with scales or fungi

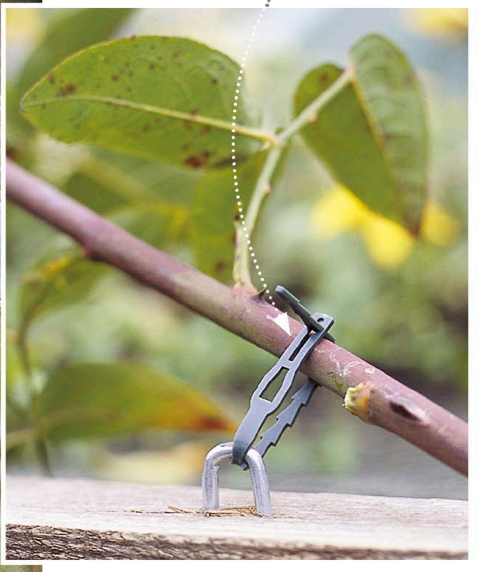
1 In autumn, first remove any dead, diseased, dying, or crossing stems, to ensure you are left with only the healthiest and strongest branches. Then you can start to prune the climber to the desired shape.

2 Armed with a pair of sharp secateurs, cut each recently flowered stem back by about two-thirds to just above a strong, healthy bud. The cut should be made at an angle, so that rain will drain away from the bud.

Watch out for the adjacent thorny branches – wearing long sleeves is best

3 On an established climbing rose, remove old, unproductive stems close to the base, using a pair of loppers or, ideally, a pruning saw to ensure a clean cut. This will stimulate the growth of new shoots.

4 Finally, tie in the pruned new growth to wire staples hammered firmly into the arch. Use adjustable plastic ties, as shown here, or garden twine fastened in a figure of eight to support the stems securely.



PRUNING A **ROSE ON A WALL**

Climbing roses will soon grow out of control if they are not pruned regularly. It is worth spending time each year removing unwanted stems and re-tying the remaining framework to its supports.

YOU WILL NEED

- secateurs
- pruning saw
- twine
- well-rotted manure or garden compost
- thick garden gloves
- thick long-sleeved top
- ladder

SEE ALSO

- **PRUNE A ROSE ARCH** >> 92/93
- **CHOOSING CLIMBERS** >> 104/107
- **BARE-ROOT ROSE** >> 116/117

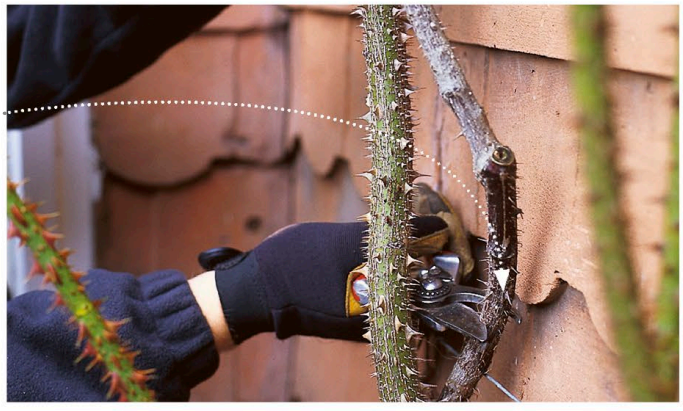
FLOWERS FOR LONGER

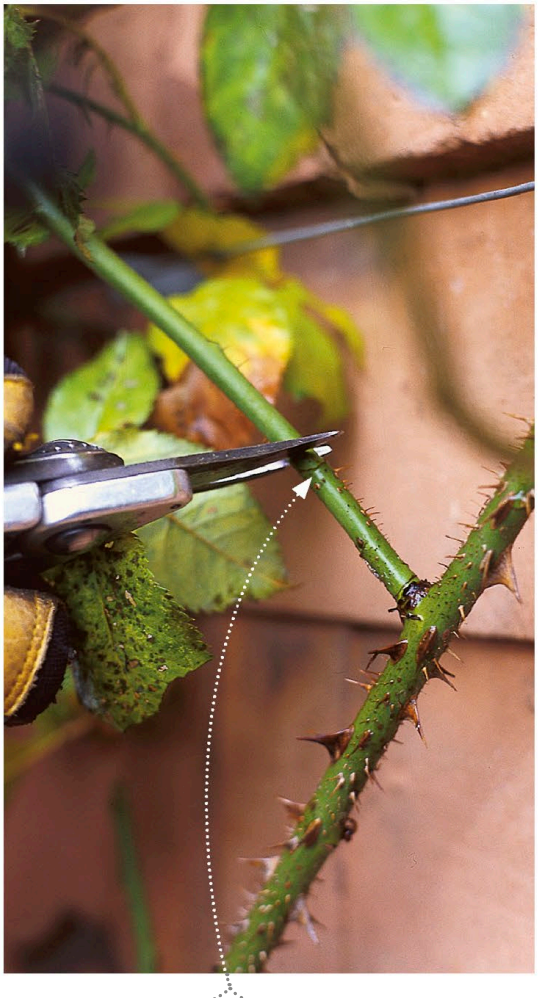
To prolong the flowering period of a climbing rose, deadhead the flowers as they fade by removing them with a pair of secateurs. This encourages the plant to produce more blooms.

Tie a knot of twine around stems to identify those to cut back

1 Before making any cuts, stand back and look at the rose growing against the wall, to visualize what it will look like after pruning. You will then know which stems to remove when you are closer to the climber.

2 In autumn or early winter, after flowering, cut out dead, diseased, or rubbing stems. Then remove any main stems that have outgrown their allotted space. Use a pair of secateurs, or a pruning saw if the branch is thick.





3 Shorten the remaining side shoots by up to two-thirds to two or three healthy buds. Always prune to just above an outward-facing bud, so that the new shoots are well positioned and grow away from, or adjacent to, the wall.

4 Reposition the main stems against the horizontal wire supports and tie them in using garden twine. You may need to hold them in position while tying, to prevent them crossing over other stems.

5 The end result should be an open framework. One stem here crosses others to fill a gap, but it isn't close enough to rub. Spread a layer of well-rotted manure or garden compost around the base to conserve moisture and to feed the plant.

A climbing rose is a versatile addition to the garden, and can be grown up walls and fences, as well as over an ornamental arch. Its prolific blooms and often deep fragrance are a summer highlight.

PRUNING **WISTERIA**

There are few sights as glorious as a mature wisteria in full bloom, but wisterias can grow very large. Prune in summer to keep long, whippy growths in check, and again in winter to keep the plant to size and to encourage more flowering the following year.

YOU WILL NEED

- secateurs
- twine
- garden gloves

SEE ALSO

- **PRUNE A ROSE ARCH** >> 92/93
- **PRUNE A ROSE WALL** >> 94/95
- **PRUNING KNOW-HOW** >> 236/237

Removing overgrowth allows more sunlight and air to reach new shoots

1 Left to its own devices, a wisteria will send out long, whippy stems, which by summer will become an unruly tangle. The plant will flower better the following year when pruned and trained flat against a wall or fence.

PRUNE HARD

Prune stems that are climbing up vertical supports to encourage as many new flowers to grow as possible. Hard pruning involves significantly cutting back old stems and branches to rejuvenate the plant for spring.

Don't hurry when pruning, and find the right spot to cut back

Cut at a slight angle in the same direction as the buds

2 In late summer, about two months after flowering, prune the current year's stems back to 15cm (6in) from a main branch with a pair of secateurs, leaving no more than six leaves. Be careful not to damage the buds.

3 In winter, reduce the length of the stems that were pruned in summer to 8–10cm (3–4in), to leave two or three buds. This will encourage short side shoots to form that will produce flowers the following year.

4 It is important to prune the wisteria all over, leaving a framework of shortened stems. Make sure that long stems are tied in well to prevent these from breaking or being damaged in the wind.

CUTTING BACK **IVY**

Ivies are versatile evergreen climbers that will grow in sun or shade, and adhere to almost any support or surface. In late spring or early summer, prune these vigorous plants to contain their spread, and to prevent stems from growing into unwanted places.

YOU WILL NEED

- secateurs
- dust mask
- garden gloves
- garden refuse bag

SEE ALSO

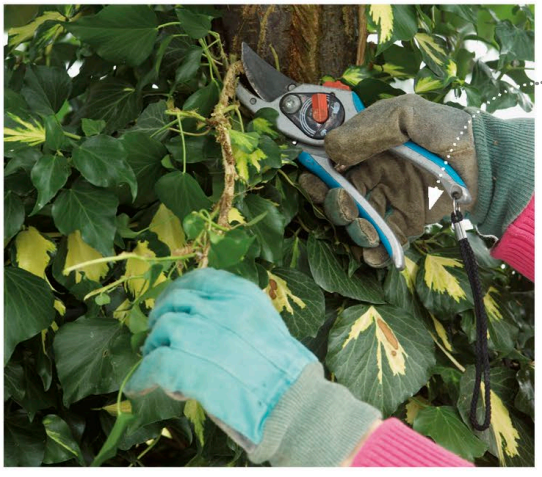
- **IVY TOPIARY BALL** >> 84/85
- **PRUNING LIGHTLY** >> 120/121
- **PRUNING KNOW-HOW** >> 236/237

Ivy can block out sunlight for other plants as it climbs over walls, fences, and trees

1 The aim of pruning here is to reduce the plant's spread over the fence and to remove it from the tree trunk in front. Ivy can collect a lot of dust and dirt, so wear a dust mask when pruning if this affects you.

AUTUMN IVY NECTAR

Avoid pruning ivy from late summer to early winter as this is often when the plant flowers. Ivy flowers provide a valuable late source of nectar for bees and other pollinating insects.



2 Working from the top of the fence panel, pull away long lengths of ivy. When you are happy with the amount removed, cut off the stems with secateurs. Also cut and pull away any ivy growing on tree trunks or other plants.

3 Remove ivy growing up walls and into house guttering. When removing ivy from walls you will reveal marks left by the clinging roots. If you feel the need, use a stiff brush to remove the root residue.

4 The ivy has been cut back from the top of the fence by about 45cm (18in) to allow room for regrowth. It has also been removed from the tree trunk, resulting in a less cluttered and lighter part of the garden.

RAISE NEW PLANTS **BY LAYERING**

Layering is a simple way of propagating plants by wounding a low-growing stem and keeping it in contact with the soil until roots form. This basic technique can be used for many climbers.

YOU WILL NEED

- climbing plant, eg chocolate vine, blue passion flower, crimson glory vine
- 10cm (4in) plant pot
- multi-purpose compost
- sharp, clean knife
- hormone rooting powder (optional)
- small piece of wire
- cane stick and string

SEE ALSO

- **GROW HERB CUTTINGS** >> 210/213

1 In spring, bury a 10cm (4in) pot, almost to its rim, in the soil close to the plant you want to layer. Fill it with fresh, multi-purpose compost and lightly firm with your fingers.

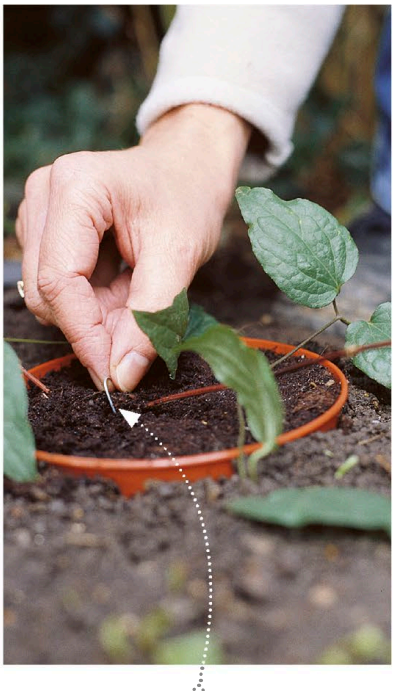
MORE LAYERING

Create more than one plant from each stem by adapting the method shown opposite. Make a series of wounds between the leaf joints of a stem, treat with hormone powder, and peg each wound just below the soil.

2 Take a healthy, low-growing stem and stretch it across the pot surface. With a sharp, clean knife make a nick in the underside of the stem, halfway between two sets of leaves.

Using hormone rooting powder is optional but increases the plant's chances of taking root

3 Dip the exposed cut in some hormone rooting powder to help speed up the formation of roots. Remove any excess powder by gently tapping the stem with your fingers. Wash your hands after handling the rooting powder.



4 Bend a small piece of wire to form a "U" shape and place over the stem, pushing the cut below the surface of the compost. Cover with a little more compost if necessary.

Tie the string loosely around the stem so as not to restrict its growth

5 Tie the free end of the stem to a cane support alongside the sunken pot. By autumn, roots should have formed. Then sever the layer close to the parent plant using secateurs, and cut the old stem on the layer back to the roots.

CHOOSING CLIMBERS **FOR SPRING INTEREST**

Ideal for covering walls, fences, arches, and obelisks, the climbing plants and wall shrubs chosen here are particularly valuable in spring, adding colourful flowers and attractive foliage to the vertical surfaces of your garden just as the rest of the garden is coming back to life.

KOLOMIKTA

Actinidia kolomikta

A twining climber, kolomikta produces masses of purple-hued leaves that turn green, pink, and white. Full sun will bring out the different colours of the foliage. In early summer, kolomikta bears small clusters of lightly fragrant flowers. It can grow up to 5m (15ft), and prefers well-drained soil. Train the stems along wires against a wall.

ALPINE CLEMATIS

Clematis alpina

With divided, mid-green leaves, alpine clematis is deciduous and bears lantern-shaped, blue, pink, or white flowers, depending on the variety, from early to late spring. These are followed by fluffy, silvery seedheads. It can reach a height of 3m (10ft) and likes a well-drained soil. Keep the roots shaded.

MOUNTAIN CLEMATIS
Clematis montana

This vigorous, deciduous climber has divided, mid-green foliage. From late spring to early summer it produces an abundance of scented white or pale pink flowers with yellow centres. Provide a large support, such as a tree, wall, or pergola, as it can scramble to 12m (40ft) unchecked. It likes sun or partial shade and a moist but well-drained soil.

CHILEAN GLORY FLOWER
Eccremocarpus scaber

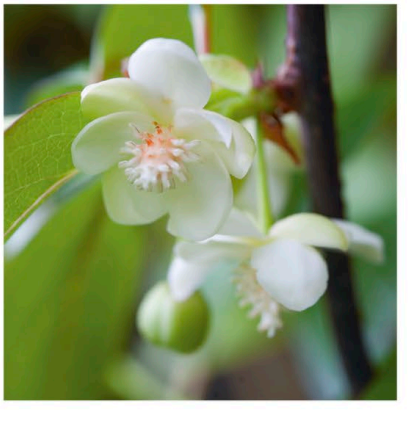
A fast-growing climber, this vine produces clusters of tube-shaped, orange-red flowers from late spring to autumn. Chilean glory flower prefers well-drained sandy or loamy soils in sunny, sheltered sites. Grown up a trellis or obelisk, its clinging tendrils will achieve heights of 2.5–4m (8–13ft). Enjoy its dark-green foliage all year round.

WEEPING FORSYTHIA
Forsythia suspensa

With slender, arching stems and small, toothed, green leaves, weeping forsythia makes an excellent deciduous wall shrub. It is grown mainly for the nodding, narrow, slim-petalled, bright yellow flowers that form on its bare branches in early spring. It can reach 3m (10ft) and prefers a well-drained site. Prune after flowering.

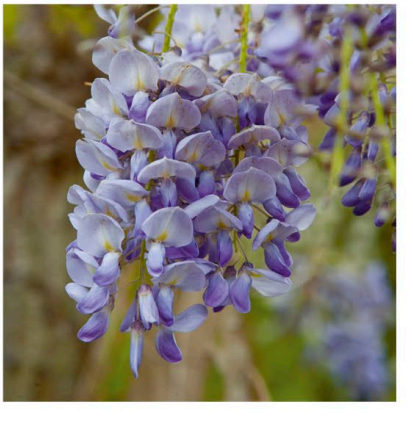
ITALIAN JASMINE
***Jasminum humile* 'Revolutum'**

An evergreen climbing shrub, Italian jasmine has glossy, bright green leaves, divided into leaflets, and fragrant, tubular, bright yellow clusters of flowers from early spring to early summer. 'Revolutum' is a popular and reliable variety. Grow it in a sheltered site on well-drained soil, where it can reach a height of 2.5m (8ft).



SCHISANDRA
Schisandra grandiflora

Delicate white flowers are borne on this twining deciduous climber from late spring to summer. If there is a male schisandra plant nearby, the female will also produce hanging red fruit in autumn. It prefers a sheltered spot with moist but well-drained soil in sun or partial shade, where it will reach a height of 10m (30ft).



WISTERIA
Wisteria* x *formosa

This vigorous, twining, woody climber has a graceful appearance. In late spring and early summer, mauve-purple, pea-like, fragrant flowers are produced, adding scent as well as colour to the display. Furry, runner bean-like seed pods often form after flowering. Wisteria likes well-drained soil in sun or dappled shade, and will grow up to 9m (30ft).

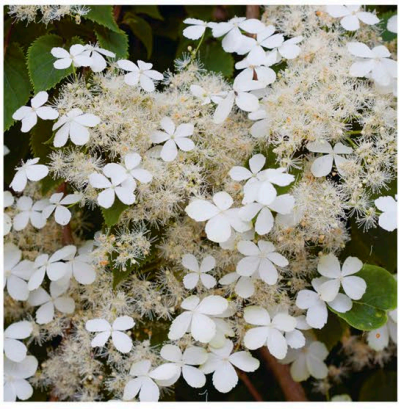
CHOOSING CLIMBERS **FOR SUMMER INTEREST**

Many climbing plants and wall shrubs like to have their roots in shade while their stems climb towards the sun. Those chosen here are at their best in summer, from the fragrant honeysuckle and roses, to black-eyed Susan, which makes a striking summer feature in a pot.

CLEMATIS

***Clematis* 'Jackmanii'**

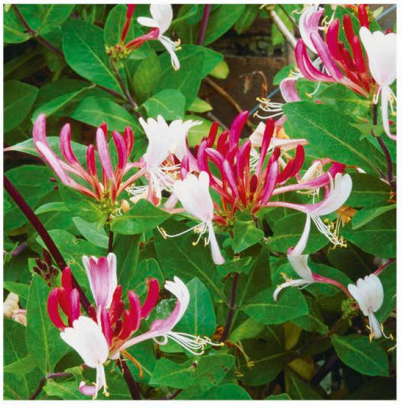
This colourful clematis is best grown around doorways and windows, where its abundance of large, purple flowers can be appreciated from mid- to late summer. It prefers full sun to partial shade, suits most soil types that are moist and well-draining, and reaches heights of 2.5–4m (8–13ft). Prune all the stems down to soil level in early spring.



CLIMBING HYDRANGEA

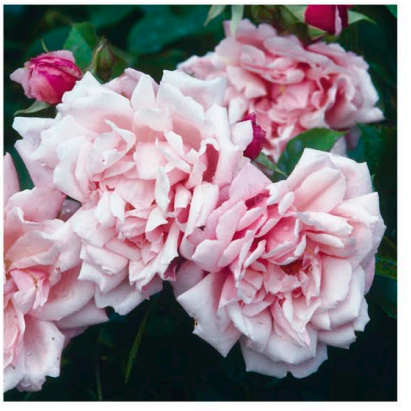
Hydrangea anomala* subsp. *petiolaris

This vigorous, woody climber has broad, rounded leaves and produces large, open heads of creamy white flowers in summer. Young plants need support until they are established. Grow in sun or partial shade and moist but well-drained soil. Slow growing at first, it can reach 15m (50ft) but can be cut back.



HONEYSUCKLE
***Lonicera periclymenum* 'Serotina'**
A highly fragrant honeysuckle, this grows vigorously through shrubs and trees, or over arches, up to 4–8m (13–26ft). It has lush foliage in spring and purple-streaked, white flowers in mid- to late summer; the scent is strongest in the evening. It prefers partial shade but will tolerate full sun and grows well when planted in moist, well-drained soil.

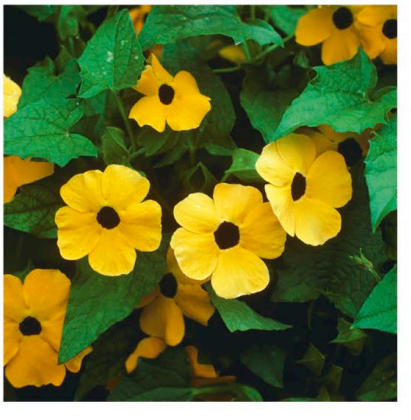
BLUE PASSIONFLOWER
Passiflora caerulea
This exotic-looking climber produces large, white flowers with purple, blue, and white filaments in summer. These are followed by oval, orange fruits. It is fast-growing in full sun or partial shade, and thrives in most moist, well-drained soils. It may be planted in borders along walls and fences, or in containers, and grows up to 8–12m (26–39ft).



RAMBLING ROSE
***Rosa* 'Albertine'**
This rose provides a showy display of very fragrant, salmon-pink flowers in midsummer. It is a large and vigorous rambler that can be grown into trees or over structures, reaching up to 5m (16ft). Alternatively, train along a wall or fence. It likes a sunny spot, and moist, well-drained soil, but tolerates poor soils. Prune after flowering.

CLIMBING ROSE
***Rosa* 'Golden Showers'**
From summer to autumn this climber produces deeply fragrant, golden-yellow flowers against dark stems and glossy green foliage. 'Golden Showers' grows best in full sun and rich, moist, well-drained soil, but tolerates shade and poor soils. It grows to 2.5–4m (8–13ft). Plant along walls or fences in borders. Prune in late autumn to early spring.

CHILEAN POTATO VINE
***Solanum crispum* 'Glasnevin'**
A semi-evergreen, scrambling climber, the Chilean potato vine has oval green leaves and clusters of fragrant, yellow-eyed violet-blue flowers from summer to autumn. These are followed by creamy white fruits that are toxic. Grow it in a warm, lightly shaded spot, where it can reach 6m (20ft). Tie in the stems regularly to keep it within bounds.



BLACK-EYED SUSAN
Thunbergia alata
Black-eyed Susan is a very decorative climber that may be grown for only one season for its bright orange-yellow blooms with distinctive black eyes. Plant in a large container, in moist, well-drained soil, and position it in a sunny spot, training it up a metal or wooden pyramid. This climber can grow up to a height of 2.5m (8ft).

SHRUBS

PLANTING A **SHRUB**

Shrubs have an important place in any garden, providing rich texture as well as flowers and foliage. Before planting, check the plant label for the shrub's preferred site and soil, since moving it at a later date will be difficult.

YOU WILL NEED

- container-grown shrub, eg currant bush, shown here
- large spade
- large fork
- cane
- garden compost
- watering can

SEE ALSO

- **CHOOSE HEALTHY PLANTS** >> 20/21
- **BARE-ROOT ROSE** >> 116/117
- **CHOOSING SHRUBS** >> 140/143

FEED YOUR SHRUB

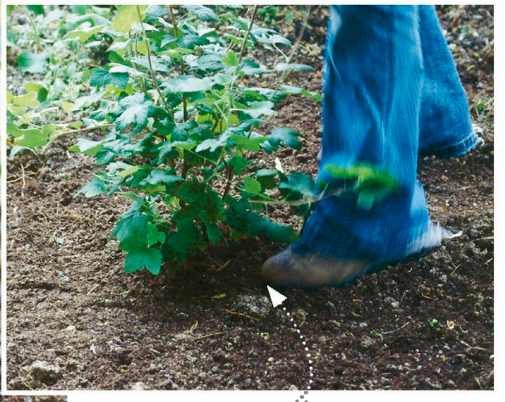
Once planted, apply a top-dressing of slow-release fertilizer above the roots. Later watering or rain will wash it down. This will give the shrub a boost during the growing season.

A wide rather than deep hole is needed for a shrub

1 Soak the plant thoroughly in its pot. Dig a large hole, approximately two to three times the diameter of the pot. Remove any old roots and large stones, and break up the soil in the base of the hole with a fork.

2 To check the hole is the correct depth, place a cane across the top; it should rest on both sides of the hole and on the top of the root ball. Position the plant with its best side facing the direction from which it will be viewed.

3 Remove the pot; it should slide off easily, leaving the root ball intact. Tease out any encircling roots. Add well-rotted organic matter, such as garden compost, to removed soil, especially if it is poor. Backfill around the root ball.



4 Water the plant well as you backfill the soil around the root ball. Firm the earth down gently. The earth surrounding the plant should be slightly sunken to assist watering. Spread a mulch of well-rotted organic matter, such as garden compost, around the plant, keeping it away from stems.

PLANTING A **SHRUB IN A POT**

Evergreen shrubs, such as hebes, make beautiful ornamental features for small spaces when planted in pots. Buy a plant with healthy leaves and an attractive shape, and avoid those with lots of roots poking through the base of the container.

YOU WILL NEED

- evergreen shrub, such as hebe, shown here
- container with drainage holes
- broken flower pots (crocks) or polystyrene pieces
- loam-based compost (without peat)
- small-stone gravel
- watering can with fine sprayhead

SEE ALSO

- **PLANT A SHRUB** >> 110/111
- **REPOTTING SHRUBS** >> 138/139
- **CHOOSING SHRUBS** >> 140/143

EVERGREEN SHRUBS

Shrubs that keep their leaves all year are known as evergreens. They provide year-round interest for small gardens where planting a tree may not be suitable. Many also produce colourful flowers followed by berries.

Choose a frost-proof container to keep shrubs outdoors in winter

1 First, check that the pot has drainage holes in the bottom, and drill a few if there are none. Place pieces of broken flower pots, or pieces of polystyrene – old plant trays are ideal – on the bottom to aid drainage. Do not block the holes.

2 Start filling the pot with fresh loam-based compost. If the compost is lumpy, break it up. Stop filling when you can stand the plant in its container on the compost with a 5cm (2in) gap to the rim of the pot.

Make sure the compost isn't too dry or wet

3 Place the shrub in its container in the centre of the pot, and start filling around it, firming in the compost. The aim is to create a hole for the plant to slot into, in exactly the right place and at the right depth. If it's off-centre, try again.

Plants prefer loose soil so don't firm it at this stage

CONTINUED ▷

Lift the shrub slowly to keep its hole in the container intact

4 Gently lift the shrub in its container straight up and out of the pot, leaving the hole intact. If you haven't already done so, give the shrub a good drink and let the water drain away. This ensures the plant gets off to a good start.

5 Carefully remove the shrub from its container, taking care not to damage its roots or break off any top-growth. Then tease out the roots at the edge of the root ball to encourage them to grow outwards.

6 Gently lower the shrub into the hole, and firm in the compost all around. Add a little more compost, if needed, to give a level surface, but make sure it is no higher up the stem than when the plant was in its original pot.

7 Water in the shrub to settle the compost and to remove any air pockets. If you don't have a fine sprayhead, pour the water onto a broken piece of flower pot so that it flows evenly and doesn't expose the roots. Repeat in each corner of the pot.

A layer of gravel helps deter weeds

8 As a final decorative touch, scatter gravel, shingle, or small pebbles in a thin layer around the shrub. Available in various colours, they set off the plant and help to keep the compost moist by reducing evaporation.

PLANTING A **BARE-ROOT ROSE**

Roses are essential shrubs for the garden and come in many varieties. Pot-grown roses can be planted all year round like other shrubs. Roses are also available bare-root, with no soil, for planting when dormant in winter.

YOU WILL NEED

- bare-root rose
- secateurs
- thick gloves
- spade and fork
- cane
- mycorrhizal fungi (optional)

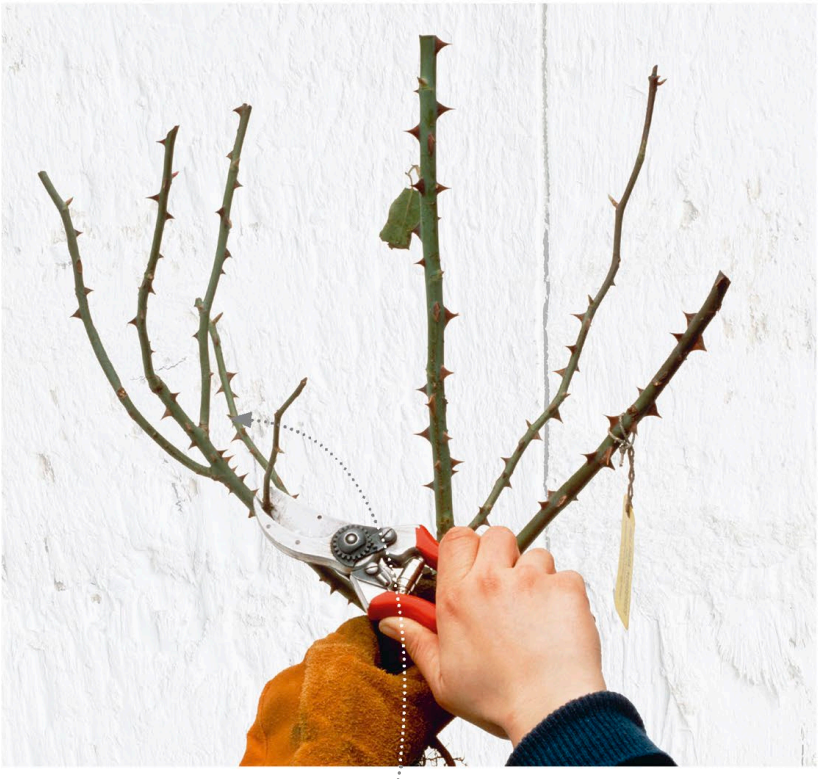
SEE ALSO

- **PLANT A SHRUB** >> 110/111
- **PRUNE SHRUB ROSES** >> 122/123
- **PRUNE A WALL ROSE** >> 94/95

JARGON BUSTER

Bare-root refers to plants dug out with the soil shaken off their roots and placed in moist packing material for sale and/or transport. They are only supplied in the winter months, and are mainly trees, shrubs, and hedging plants.

If you cannot plant a bare-root plant as soon as you receive it, heel it into the ground temporarily by planting it very roughly with soil covering the roots so it does not dry out or get frost damage.



1 Remove diseased or damaged growth. Cut out any crossing shoots and thin or straggly stems at the base to produce a balanced shape. Trim any thick roots by about one-third.

2 Dig out a hole with a spade, slightly wider and deeper than the roots of the rose. Use a fork to loosen the soil at the base. You can mix mycorrhizal fungi in, according to the packet instructions, to encourage healthy roots.

3 Place the rose in the centre of the hole and spread out the roots evenly. Lay a cane across the hole to check that the bud union will be 2.5cm (1in) below soil level when the rose is planted, adjusting the depth if needed.

4 Fill in the hole with soil, firming with your hands in stages to anchor the roots firmly in the soil. Lightly tread down the surrounding soil. Gently rake over the soil and water well.

PRUNING AN EARLY **SUMMER-FLOWERING SHRUB**

For shrubs to perform at their best, they need an annual prune. Prune those that flower in early summer after flowering. Some need a light trim, while others, like this mock orange (*Philadelphus*), can be cut back harder to encourage new stems.

YOU WILL NEED

- secateurs
- garden gloves
- garden refuse bag

SEE ALSO

- **PRUNING WISTERIA** >> 98/99
- **PRUNING LIGHTLY** >> 120/121
- **PRUNING HYDRANGEA** >> 124/125

WHEN TO PRUNE

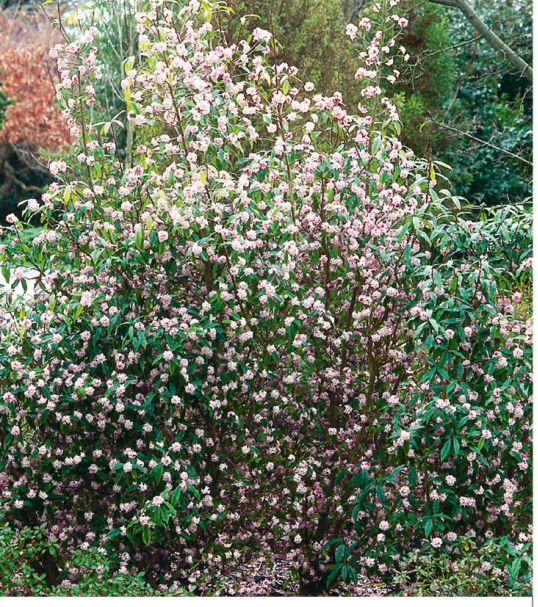
Shrubs that flower in early summer are best pruned after flowering. For those that flower later in the summer, prune in early spring so new stems can grow to flower later the same year. Avoid pruning in winter.

1 Wait until the flowers begin to fade before pruning. With annual pruning, this mock orange will continue to bear its masses of scented white flowers in early summer year after year.

2 Cut back about a quarter of the oldest flowering stems to 15cm (6in) above the ground. This encourages young, vigorous stems to grow from the buds below the pruning cuts, and these stems will bear next year's flowers.

3 Shorten any old stems that have young growths lower down. Take off the top third of these old stems, pruning them back to a younger branch. Also remove any dead, damaged, or diseased wood.

4 Trim the tips of any strong young stems that are already present to encourage lower branching and more flowers. The finished plant should look more compact and tidy, and give rise to lots of young, fresh growth.



LIGHTLY
PRUNING SHRUBS

Many shrubs, such as this *Daphne bholua* 'Jacqueline Postill', produce long, leggy growths in the spring. Trim these and the resulting plant will be bushier with more flowers.

YOU WILL NEED

- secateurs
- garden gloves
- garden refuse bags

SEE ALSO

- **PRUNING SUMMER SHRUBS** >> 118/119
- **PRUNE SHRUB ROSES** >> 122/123
- **PRUNING KNOW-HOW** >> 236/237

1 In early summer, *Daphne* starts to produce many long growths at the ends of its main stems. These can give the plant an untidy and leggy appearance.

PRUNING YOUNG PLANTS

Where the growths are softer on young plants, pinch out the tips with your thumb and forefinger. This is good practice, because it helps to produce a compact, well-branched structure.

2 Using secateurs, shorten the leggy growths by 15–20cm (6–8in). Always prune immediately above a leaf bud with an angled, slanting cut, as shown.

Hold a branch firmly to help you to prune at an angle

Extra growth that is pruned out could be used for cuttings

3 Continue to work around the plant. Trimming the stems like this encourages bushier growth, and all the new stems will produce flowers in the winter. It also helps to keep the plant smaller and more compact.

PRUNING A **SHRUB ROSE**

Most modern shrub roses are repeat flowering and do not need to be pruned as hard as bush roses, since they flower on older stems. Prune your shrub roses in early spring.

YOU WILL NEED

- thick gloves
- secateurs

SEE ALSO

- **BARE-ROOT ROSE** >> 116/117
- **PRUNE A ROSE ARCH** >> 92/93
- **PRUNE A ROSE WALL** >> 94/95

1 The aim of pruning a shrub rose is to create a strong structure and to remove congested stems that were produced the previous year. This improves air flow through the plant, which helps to prevent fungal diseases.

PRUNE BUSH ROSES

Prune Hybrid Tea and Floribunda bush roses hard in early spring. Cut out old, diseased, and crossing shoots and then cut the rest to 15cm (6in) from the ground for Hybrid Teas, 20–30cm (8–12in) for Floribundas.

2 Cut off any dead, damaged, or diseased branches. Then remove any weak shoots that are not strong enough to support new flower growths. Also prune a few of the oldest stems down to the ground.

3 Reduce healthy main stems by a quarter, and prune some of the sideshoots by just a few centimetres (inches). Always cut above a healthy bud that faces outwards, away from the centre of the plant, if possible.

4 The pruned plant should be reduced in height by about a quarter, and have a strong, open, structure that appears uncluttered in the centre. By midsummer the plant should be covered in beautiful blooms.

PRUNING **HYDRANGEA**

Hydrangea macrophylla, or mophead hydrangea, flowers in summer from buds that have been set the previous year. Careful pruning will protect these developing buds, which are prone to frost damage in the spring, ensuring a good display of flowers.

YOU WILL NEED

- secateurs
- garden gloves
- garden refuse bags

SEE ALSO

- **PRUNE A ROSE ARCH** >> 92/93
- **PRUNING WISTERIA** >> 98/99
- **PRUNE WINTER STEMS** >> 130/131

COLOUR CHANGES

Mophead hydrangea is one variety known to change flower colour depending on the soil type: blue in acid, mauve in neutral, and pink in alkaline soils. White varieties stay white regardless of soil pH.

1 The hydrangea's old flower heads help to protect the delicate new flower buds from frosts. Leave them on the plant during the winter to ensure a good display of colourful blooms the following summer.

2 When the danger of hard frost has passed in late spring, remove the flower heads by pruning the stems back to a pair of healthy buds, as shown.

Bare stems continue to add structure and interest to the winter garden even after the dried flowers are removed

3 Do not be tempted to prune too hard as this will remove many of the flower buds already formed on the stems that grew the previous year. New stems that grow in the coming year will bloom the following summer.

With their large, showy flowers, hydrangeas are shrubs that offer long-lasting interest. They bloom for weeks at a time, then their fading flower heads give structure in the border in winter.

PRUNING **LAVENDER**

Lavender (*Lavandula*) is a beautiful aromatic shrub that can be grown on its own or as a low-growing, colourful hedge. To maintain a good shape, it is best pruned twice a year, with a thorough prune in spring, then deadheading after flowering.

YOU WILL NEED

- hedge shears

SEE ALSO

- **LAVENDER HEDGE** >> 208/209
- **CHOOSING SHRUBS** >> 140/143

1 To keep your lavender plants young, bushy, and healthy, cut them back in late winter or early spring using clean, sharp hedge shears.

DEADHEADING

After flowering, remove all the old flower heads with secateurs. This stops the plant from putting all its energy into making seed, and maintains the neat rounded shape of the plant.

2 Here you can see how the lavender has been cut just above where the new, green shoots meet the old, brown wood. This is very important as the old wood does not regenerate, which means that if you cut into it no new shoots will grow from the stems.

3 Shear the lavender as close as possible to the old wood without cutting into it. Work systematically along and around the hedge or each individual plant, keeping it as even as possible.

Stand back from time to time to check how evenly you are cutting

4 This form of pruning encourages the lavender to become very bushy, and to produce a greater volume of flowers. The plants then need to be deadheaded again as the flowers fade in summer.

PRUNING FOR **WINTER STEMS**

Some dogwoods and willows are cut down almost to the ground each year, or every other year, to encourage masses of colourful young stems that provide a great winter display.

YOU WILL NEED

- secateurs
- garden gloves
- compost
- slow-release fertilizer

SEE ALSO

- **PLANT A SHRUB** >> 110/111
- **CHOOSING SHRUBS** >> 140/143
- **PRUNING KNOW-HOW** >> 236/237

JARGON BUSTER

Fertilizers are a source of concentrated nutrients for plants.

Slow-release fertilizers do just that – they release nutrients slowly into the soil, because they degrade more slowly. They may be made of organic or inorganic material.

Prune dead wood at the centre of the plant for fuller regrowth the next year

1 Remove weak, dead, or diseased growth to reduce congestion at the centre. All winter-stem shrubs, like this dogwood, should be pruned in late winter or early spring.

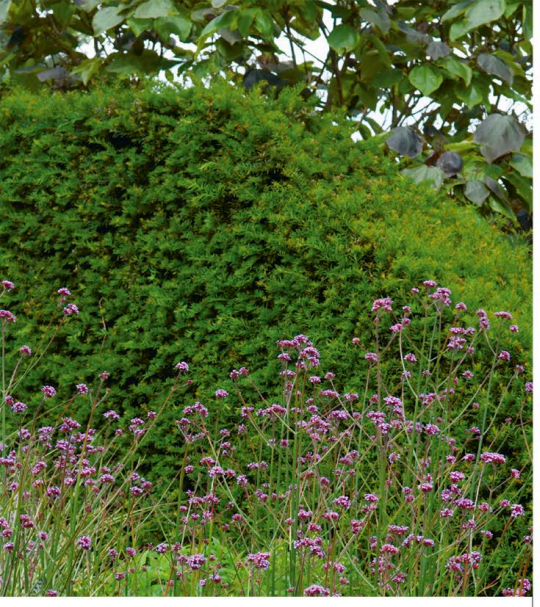
Remove wispy stems to encourage the plant to sprout stronger shoots

2 Cut back all the previous year's growth to the first pair of buds at the base of the stem. This will establish a system of young spurs, which will send out new stems.

Cut at a slight angle in the same direction as the bud

3 Thin out some of the older, thicker spurs to reduce the chance of crossing stems that may rub and damage each other. Crossing growth will also make the plant look congested and untidy.

4 After pruning, you should be left with a simple, open structure from which a mass of strong, colourful new stems will grow. Add a layer of compost and a slow-release fertilizer around the base of the plant.



PLANTING A **HEDGE**

The best time to plant a hedge is autumn. Long-lived evergreens with dense foliage, such as yew, holly, or box, are ideal. Hawthorn, privet, and beech make good deciduous hedges. You can buy container-grown plants all year, and bare-root from late autumn.

YOU WILL NEED

- spade
- well-rotted manure or compost
- string or twine
- wooden or card marker
- canes
- hedging plants, eg yew

SEE ALSO

- **PRUNING LAVENDER** >> 128/129
- **TRIM A HEDGE** >> 134/135

1 Dig over a strip, 1m (3ft) wide, to a spade's depth, and incorporate well-rotted manure or compost. Fix a line to mark the straight line of the hedge and dig a trench that's wide enough for the plants.

ADD MULCH

After planting, add a deep mulch of chipped bark or well-rotted manure, leaving gaps around the stems of the hedging plants. This will seal in moisture, deter weeds, and encourage rooting.

2 Make a planting guide by first marking a distance of 50–60cm (20–24in) on a piece of wood or stiff card. Then place bamboo canes at these intervals along the string guide, and insert one plant beside each cane.

Use a cane to mark the planting position of each plant

3 Position plants at the same depth as they were originally; on bare-root types, look for the dark stain on the stem. Hold the plant firmly in place while you move the excavated soil back into the trench to support the roots.

4 Continue backfilling the trench and then firm the plants in with your foot, ensuring good contact between soil and roots. Don't press too hard. Roughly level the surface and water thoroughly.

TRIMMING A **HEDGE**

Whether you have inherited a mature hedge or planted one that is thickening up well, you need to trim it regularly to maintain a dense barrier at the height you want. Hedges can also be clipped into interesting shapes and outlines as a garden feature.

YOU WILL NEED

- garden shears
- electric or petrol hedge cutter
- line of string (optional)
- protective gloves, goggles, and ear defenders

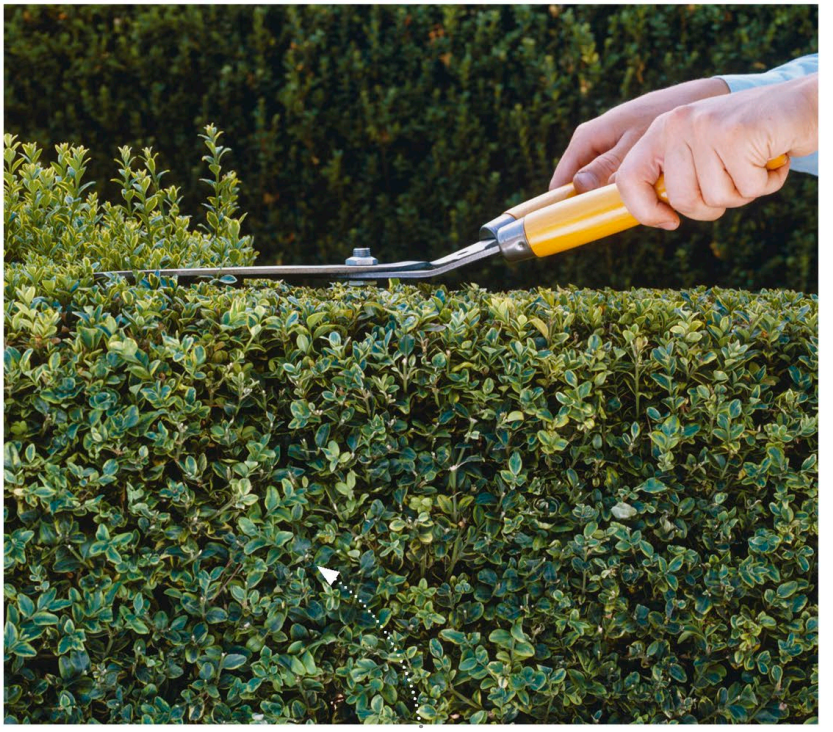
SEE ALSO

- **PLANT A HEDGE** >> 132/133
- **PRUNING LAVENDER** >> 128/129

EVERGREEN HEDGES

Many conifer hedges will not regrow if cut back into old wood. Yew is one of the few exceptions. It is important to trim them back at least twice a year, therefore; leave it too long and cutting back may result in bare patches.

TRIMMING A SMALLER HEDGE



1 Use shears to cut the top and sides of a small hedge. For a formal hedge you are aiming to achieve a flat surface, so use a line to keep your cutting straight if needed. For a less formal hedge you can cut to a more rounded shape.

TRIMMING A LARGER HEDGE

1 A mature hedge will put on considerable growth each year, and needs to be pruned in late summer to keep it to the desired size, cutting back to where the hedge was pruned the previous year. Use shears for a smaller hedge or a hedge cutter for a larger one.

Use safety goggles and ear defenders when operating a hedge cutter

2 For a tall hedge, use a safety ladder to reach the top, cutting back to the previous summer's growth. Try to keep a straight edge as you work. Never over-stretch or lean out too far – get down and move the ladder instead.

MAKING A **TOPIARY CONE**

Simple, architectural topiary shapes, such as cones, are easy to create and suit many situations. Allow a topiary plant to grow to the height you want before trimming it to the desired shape.

YOU WILL NEED

- boxwood shrub
- long-handled shears
- garden gloves (optional)

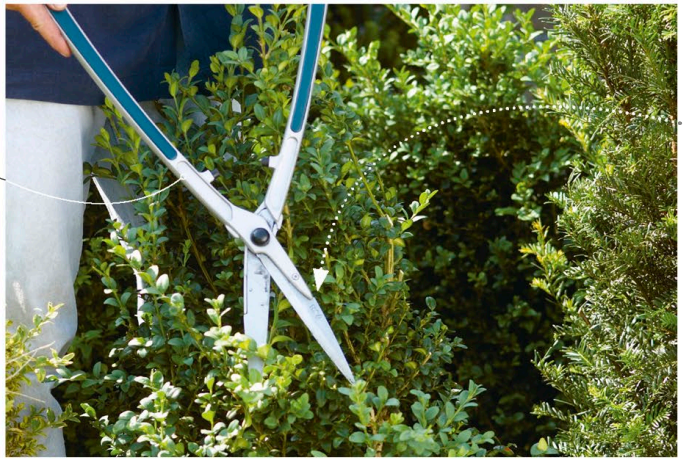
SEE ALSO

- **PLANT A SHRUB** >> 110/111
- **SHRUBS IN POTS** >> 112/115
- **PRUNING KNOW-HOW** >> 236/237

1 When buying box or other topiary plants, look for healthy specimens densely covered in unblemished leaves, with a strong leading upright shoot in the centre. Before planting, ensure that the plant's best side is facing the front.

KEEP TOOLS CLEAN

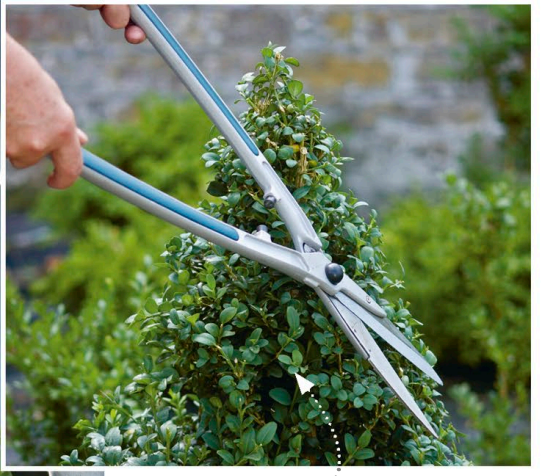
To prevent the spread of disease, sterilize your tools before trimming a new plant. Inexpensive household disinfectant will do the job. Rub on some oil after use, to prevent rust.



Work slowly to avoid trimming too much off the plant initially

2 Stand above the plant, and locate a central shoot that will form the point at the top of the cone. With long-handled shears, start to trim the box from this point in an outward direction. Keep moving around the plant as you clip.

3 Stand back from time to time to assess the shape of the cone. To achieve a perfectly circular cone, look directly down at it from the central point. From this position you can see if the cone is clipped equally all around.



4 If your cone has a few gaps, don't be tempted to keep trimming, or you will end up with a tiny topiary. Leave the gaps, and after a few months young shoots will form and fill them out. Tidy up your cone twice a year in summer.

REPOTTING **A SHRUB**

All permanent shrubs need repotting into a bigger container, usually every two years in spring. This gives the roots more space to grow and an energizing "meal" of fresh compost.

YOU WILL NEED

- large container
- long kitchen knife
- hand fork
- secateurs
- broken terracotta pieces
- multi-purpose compost
- watering can

SEE ALSO

- **SHRUBS IN POTS** >> 112/115
- **PRUNING LIGHTLY** >> 120/121
- **PRUNING SUMMER SHRUBS** >> 118/119

PLAN AHEAD

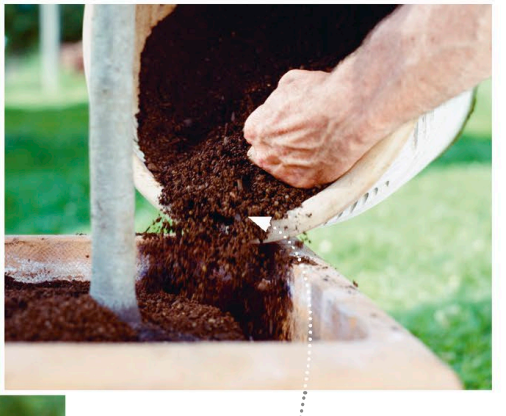
Shrubs, in general, prefer to remain undisturbed but they can be repotted, as shown here, when needed. Plan ahead by choosing a pot that will be large enough for the shrub to grow over the next two years.

1 Lay the pot on its side, ask someone to hold it, and gently ease out the plant by pulling its stem. If you're in danger of damaging the plant, or it is stuck, slide a long kitchen knife around the insides of the pot to free the root ball.

2 The roots will probably be in a tightly congested lump, in which case use a hand fork to prise out the encircling growth, and shake off the old "dead" compost and surface moss. Aim to create an open spread of roots.

Untangle gravel and other old debris from the roots

3 Cut back the main, thick, anchoring roots by up to one-third but leave the thin, fibrous roots unpruned. Pruning promotes the growth of more thin roots, which absorb moisture and nutrients.



4 Replace the old broken pots (for drainage) in the base of the new, bigger pot, tip in some compost, and position the plant. Once the plant is centred and upright, pour in more compost, firming it down, and water in well. Top off with gravel.

CHOOSING SHRUBS
FOR YEAR-ROUND INTEREST

Shrubs define the background of most gardens, providing colour, structure, and texture throughout the year. Many can also form a central feature on account of their unusual foliage, flowers, or berries. Those chosen here provide interest over at least three seasons.

ABELIA

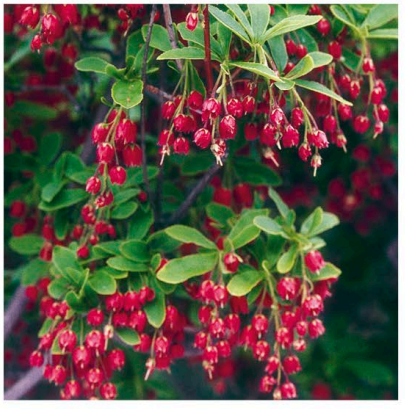
Abelia x grandiflora

A graceful flowering shrub with an attractive arching habit, abelia retains its glossy dark green leaves throughout winter, except in very cold areas. The pale pink, scented flowers appear in early summer and last until autumn. It can reach 3m (10ft) in height and 4m (12ft) in spread. Plant in full sun in moist, well-drained soil.

MEXICAN ORANGE BLOSSOM

***Choisya ternata* 'Sundance'**

This evergreen shrub has bright yellow foliage that can lighten a corner of any garden. The leaves are slightly darker in colour when it is grown in the shade. In very cold areas, this plant requires a sheltered position, such as against a sunny wall. It grows up to 2.5m (8ft). Mexican orange blossom thrives in most well-draining soils.



DROOPING RED ENKIANTHUS

Enkianthus cernuus* f. *rubens

Preferring acidic or neutral soil, this is a medium to large, deciduous shrub that produces a colourful display of deep red, bell-shaped flowers that hang in clusters from late spring to summer. The leaves turn rich shades of red and purple in autumn. This plant can reach 2.5m (8ft) and prefers a site with well-drained soil in sun or partial shade.

JAPANESE ARALIA

Fatsia japonica

The large, deeply lobed, evergreen leaves of this shrub inject colour and texture into containers and borders, and the round clusters of tiny, white autumn flowers and black fruits add to the effect. This plant is ideal for a city garden as it tolerates pollution. It can reach 3m (10ft), and will grow well in sun or partial shade in moist or well-drained soil.

PRICKLY HEATH

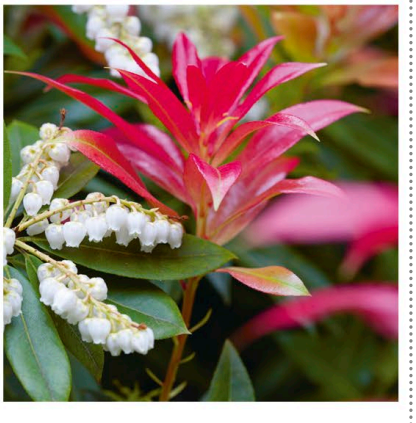
***Gaultheria mucronata* 'Wintertime'**

Impressive, waxy white berries in autumn and winter are the reason for growing this evergreen, spreading shrub. It produces small white flowers in late spring. Grow a male plant nearby to ensure a good crop of berries. It is relatively small at 1.2m (4ft) and likes moist, neutral to acid soil in sun or partial shade.

DOG HOBBLE

***Leucothöe fontanesiana* 'Scarletta'**

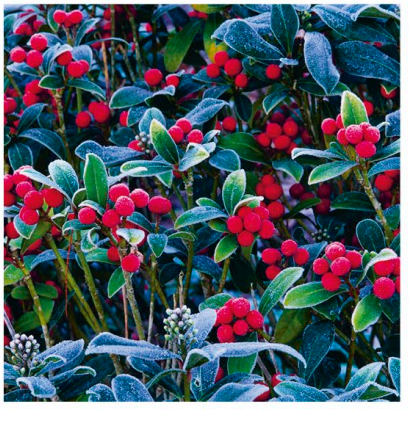
Decorate a winter garden with this evergreen, mid- to back-of-border shrub, which has arching, red-tinged stems, green leaves, and cream, bell-shaped spring flowers. 'Scarletta' (above) has bronze-tinted winter leaves. Dog hobble is slow growing and reaches 1.5m (5ft) tall. It prefers shade or partial shade and a moist, acid soil.



PIERIS

***Pieris formosa* var. *forrestii* 'Wakehurst'**

An evergreen shrub, pieris is grown for its attractive young spring foliage. The leaves of 'Wakehurst' are scarlet when young, changing to cream and then green. In spring it has clusters of white, bell-shaped flowers. Grow in sun or partial shade in a moist or well-drained, slightly acidic soil. It may reach 2m (6ft).



SKIMMIA

Skimmia japonica

This neat, evergreen shrub with dark green, glossy leaves has dense heads of tiny, fragrant, pink- or red-budded, white flowers in spring. If a male plant is nearby for pollination, female plants develop vivid red berries, which persist into winter. Skimmia thrives in a moist soil in partial shade and eventually grows to a height of 1.5m (5ft).

CHOOSING SHRUBS
FOR AUTUMN INTEREST

Shrubs can provide a welcome boost of colour in the garden in autumn, just when many other plants are starting to fade. Some of these tolerant and versatile plants have an astonishing and changing array of leaf colours from bright red to bronze and purple, and many have berries.

BLUEBEARD
***Caryopteris* x *clandonensis* 'Heavenly Blue'**
This small shrub has beautiful blue flowers in late summer and early autumn above decorative, aromatic, silvery-green foliage. 'Heavenly Blue' is popular for the intensity of its flower colour. It is best planted in light, well-drained soil and grows to 1m (3ft). Keep it compact by cutting back to low buds in spring.

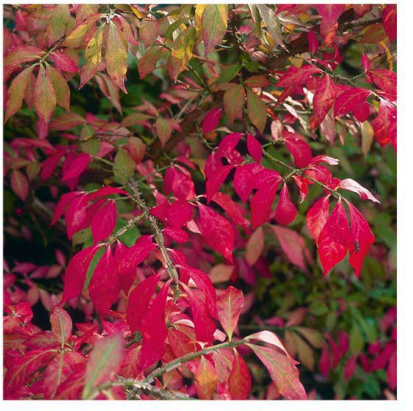
DOGWOOD
***Cornus alba* 'Sibirica'**
In autumn, the leaves of this dogwood turn rich shades of yellow, orange, and red before falling. It has bright red bare stems in winter, and bears flattened heads of white flowers in early summer, followed by bluish-white fruits. It can grow to about 3m (10ft) tall, and prefers a site in full sun in well-drained soil.

SMOKE BUSH
***Cotinus* 'Grace'**

The broadly oval leaves of this shrub turn from purple to scarlet-red and flame-orange in autumn. Whether purple- or green-leaved, all smoke bush varieties offer an eye-catching autumn display, especially when backlit by the sun. 'Grace' grows to 6m (20ft) but can be pruned to keep it much smaller. It likes a well-drained, sunny site.

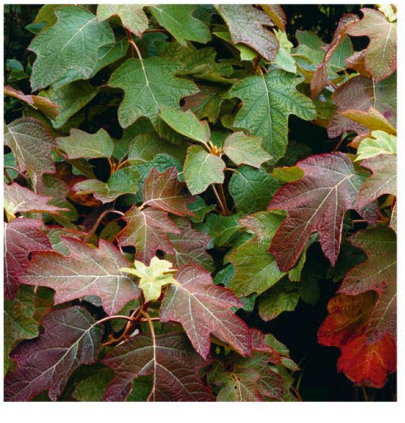
COTONEASTER
Cotoneaster horizontalis

A low-growing shrub, this is excellent for covering walls and fences, and is also suitable as ground cover. Cotoneaster plants produce bright red berries in the autumn, which follow the small white summer flowers; both attract wildlife. Plant in full sun in well-drained soils. It reaches 1m (3ft), and can grow vigorously through other shrubs.



EUONYMUS
Euonymus alatus

A spreading, deciduous shrub, *Euonymus alatus* is valued mainly for its autumn display, when the green foliage turns a spectacular crimson and scarlet, and purple and red fruits split open to reveal orange seed. It is ideal for the back of a mixed border, reaching about 2m (6ft), and likes sun or partial shade and moist soil.



OAK-LEAVED HYDRANGEA
Hydrangea quercifolia

The lobed leaves of this shrub make a fine backdrop for the cream, cone-shaped clusters flowers that develop from midsummer to autumn. In autumn, after developing maroon tints, the leaves take on striking red and purple hues. The plant reaches 2m (6ft) and likes moist soil and partial shade.

FIRETHORN
***Pyracantha* 'Mohave'**

This evergreen shrub has prickly stems and produces clusters of white blooms in summer, followed by orange-red berries. Other varieties are also available, with fruits that ripen in shades of orange, red, and yellow. It prefers a sunny or slightly shady situation in well-drained soil, and can grow to 4m (12ft) .

ROSEHIP
***Rosa* 'Fru Dagmar Hastrup'**

With its healthy crinkled foliage, this shrub rose produces single, fragrant, soft pink blooms in flushes from summer to early autumn, and large, deep red, tomato-like hips alongside later flowers. The hips are attractive to birds. This plant reaches 1m (3ft) and prefers a well-drained soil in a sunny situation.

GRASSES

PLANTING GRASSES **IN THE GROUND**

Most grasses are container-grown. The best times to plant them in the garden are in spring, to give them a whole growing season to settle in, or in autumn, when the soil is warm and moist enough for the roots to grow strongly before winter.

YOU WILL NEED

- grasses grown in a container
- garden compost (optional)
- watering can or hose

SEE ALSO

- **CARING FOR GRASSES** >> 148/149
- **DIVIDING GRASSES** >> 154/155
- **CHOOSING GRASSES** >> 156/157

DECORATIVE GRASSES

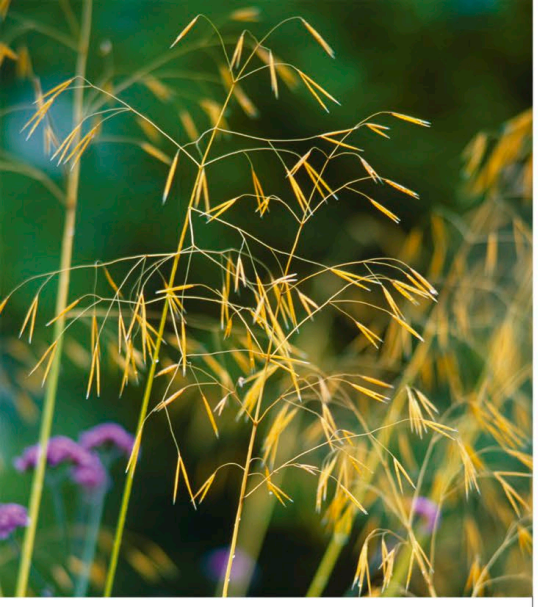
Different grasses offer a wealth of colours, shapes, and sizes. Not all are green: grasses may be blue, red, bronze, or silver. Some provide autumn colour and others are evergreen. Choose to suit the style of your garden.

1 Dig a hole large enough to take the full depth of the container. Place the potted plant in the hole to ensure the top of the compost is level with the soil. Water the grass well in its pot before planting to give it a good start.

2 Remove the plant from its pot and gently tease out the roots around the edges of the root ball. This encourages them to grow out into the surrounding soil early.

3 Place the plant centrally into the hole, and fill in the dug out soil around the edges, firming gently with your fingers. Some people like to mix compost into the removed soil, but this is not absolutely necessary.

4 Using a watering can or hose, gently water in the plant. This not only provides it with moisture but ensures soil particles are washed into close contact with the roots. Keep the plant moist but don't overwater.



CARING FOR **GRASSES**

Ornamental grasses and grass-like plants are among the easiest to maintain of all garden plants, but low maintenance is not no maintenance: a little regular attention will keep them looking their best.

KEY POINTS

- **One of the attractions** of grasses is their ornamental seed heads. Only cut off the seed heads from grasses where self-seeding has become a problem. For example, grasses such as prairie dropseed or sedges could become problematic and self-seed.
- **Grasses that fade to brown** in autumn and winter provide an interesting feature in the garden – one to enjoy as long as possible.

SEE ALSO

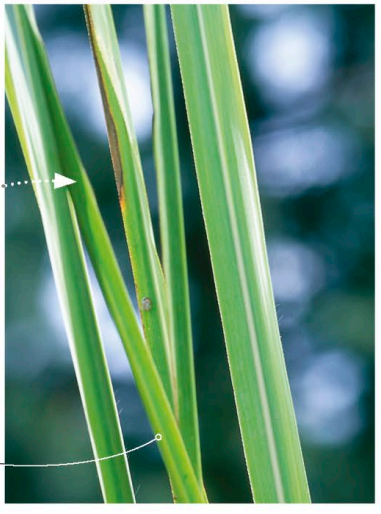
- **PLANTING GRASSES** >> 146/147
- **CUTTING GRASSES** >> 152/153
- **DIVIDING GRASSES** >> 154/155

JARGON BUSTER

Spring-tine rakes have thin metal prongs, in contrast to wider pronged plastic or bamboo rakes. They are ideal for removing leaf litter and mosses, or tidying other light garden materials, such as combing grasses.

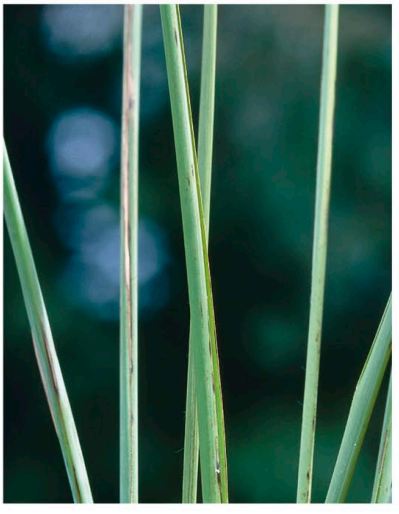
Remember to spring clean Older leaves may go brown in winter. Affected leaves of small plants such as some sedges, acorus, luzula, and ophiopogon can be removed individually, but with larger plants such as festuca (above), it is quicker to comb the clump with a spring-tine rake.

Healthy and stressed grasses
Healthy grass leaves are usually flat and green right to the tips, indicating that the plant is growing well. A sign of stress is when leaves roll up into tubes. In dry conditions, this is a sign that the plant needs more water, because it is minimizing the surface area of its leaves to reduce moisture loss. In wet conditions, it can indicate the plant roots are too wet and the plant will need moving to a drier position.



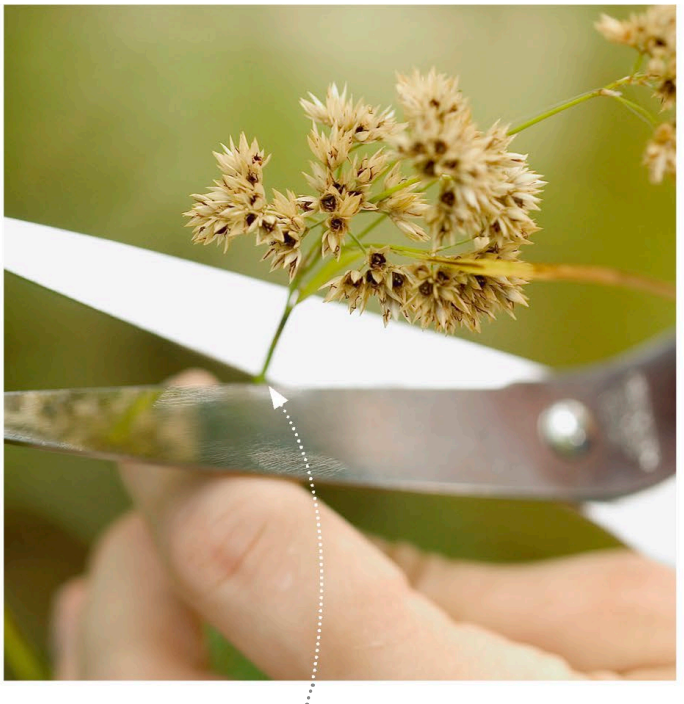
Healthy blades of grass stand strong and upright

Healthy grass with flat, green leaves.



Stressed grass with leaves rolled into tubes.

Cut out dead or diseased foliage
Even grasses that stay green all year round eventually fade and die off from the tips downwards. Yellow or brown areas can be trimmed off with scissors, or the whole leaf cut off at its base.



Preventing excessive seedlings Some grasses and grass-like plants shed a lot of seed, and the resulting offspring can become problem weeds. To avoid this, simply cut off fading flowers before they start shedding seed, using secateurs or scissors.

Grasses can add different textures and movement to the garden, providing an airy addition to a mixed border, or massed on their own, as here, for a modern, structural effect.

CUTTING BACK **GRASSES**

It is important to cut back non-evergreen (deciduous) grasses hard to keep them looking their best. This can be done in late autumn or, if you want to keep grasses uncut in winter for structure and interest, cut them back in early spring.

YOU WILL NEED

- secateurs, or loppers, or electric hedge trimmer
- garden gloves

SEE ALSO

- **CARING FOR GRASSES** >> 148/149
- **DIVIDING GRASSES** >> 154/155
- **CHOOSING GRASSES** >> 156/157

JARGON BUSTER

Deciduous grasses are those that lose their green colour and die back to a golden-brown shade in autumn and winter. Like deciduous trees shedding old leaves in autumn and winter to be replaced by new leaves in spring, deciduous grasses will start to show green shoots early in the year.

Trim a few older stems at a time to avoid cutting back new growth

1 In late winter or early spring, cut back the previous summer's browned stems near ground level. If leaving to mid-spring to cut back early-flowering species, try not to damage any new green shoots.

2 Work your way methodically through the clump, removing all the old stems (which can be composted). Some grasses can be divided once cut back, while others are best divided when in active growth.

ALTERNATIVE METHODS

Thick stems or short leaves
Some grasses are too tough for garden clippers, and can injure bare skin. Protect your hands by wearing gloves or using long loppers for cutting.

Cutting back larger areas
It's quicker to use an electric hedge trimmer to cut back larger clumps. Cut the stems slightly higher than you would with clippers to avoid damaging new growth at the base.

DIVIDING **GRASSES**

Most large grasses are easy to divide in autumn or spring, giving you extra plants that may be particularly useful for spring plantings. Wait until late autumn to late winter to divide *Stipa* grasses because they react badly to being divided earlier.

YOU WILL NEED

- saw or large serrated knife
- watering can

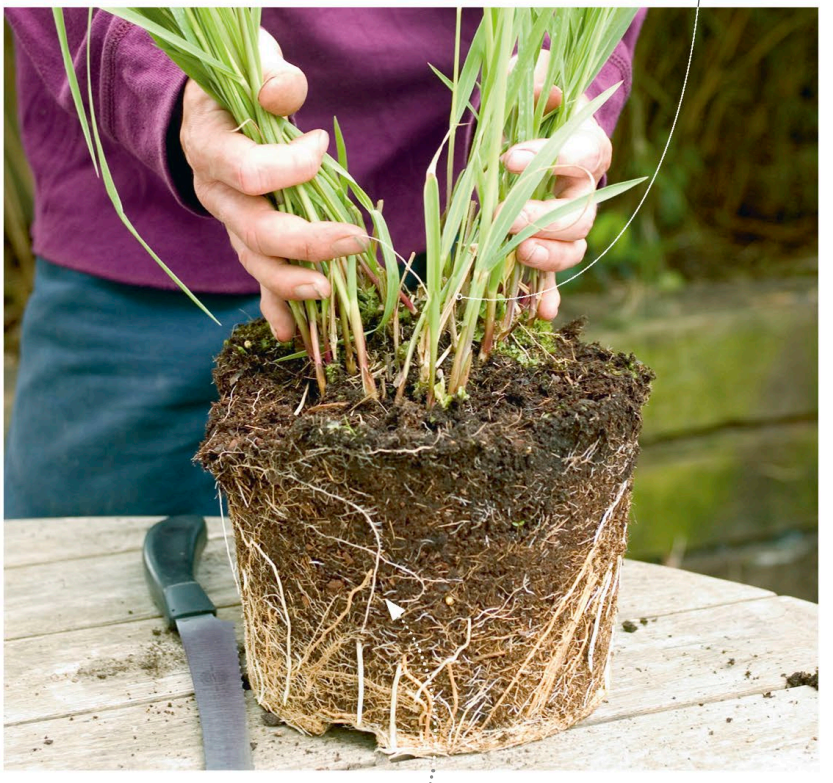
SEE ALSO

- **CARING FOR GRASSES** >> 148/149
- **CUTTING GRASSES** >> 152/153
- **CHOOSING GRASSES** >> 156/157

DON'T BURY THE CROWN

When planting in the ground, leave the crown of newly divided grasses slightly above the surface to discourage root rot, but do make sure the roots are covered or they will dry out.

Grasses can also be dug up after they've been cut back and then split



1 Remove the plant from the pot and look at its size and lines of growth to decide where best to divide it. This blue lyme grass (*Leymus arenarius*) lends itself to being split in two. Larger grasses may give three or four divisions.

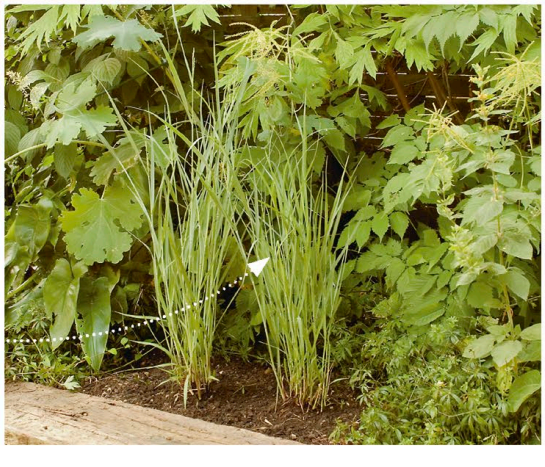
Hold top and sides of plant to divide into two parts

2 Using a saw or large serrated knife, cut through the crown of the plant along the lines of least resistance. The crown is usually only a few centimetres deep, and cutting becomes easier once it is sliced.

3 Having cut through the crown, gently separate the rest of the root ball with your hands – this causes less damage to the fibrous grass root system than cutting it.

Both divisions should be a large size for replanting

4 Plant out the divided pieces in the same way as container plants, spacing them at least 30cm (12in) apart and watering them in well. Two or more clumps together are very effective in the garden bed.



CHOOSING **GRASSES**

A huge range of grasses is available to provide year-round interest in your garden, whether grown in containers, in mixed borders, or grouped as a feature. Relatively low maintenance, grasses offer a surprising variety of colour and give a sense of movement to the garden.

FEATHER REED GRASS
***Calamagrostis* x *acutiflora* 'Karl Foerster'**
A good choice in an informal border for a natural style of planting, 'Karl Foerster' is an upright grower with arrow-like flower heads reaching 1.5m (5ft). Its leaves and flowers withstand winter well, but need cutting back in spring before new growth starts. Grow in sun or partial shade, in moist, well-drained soil.

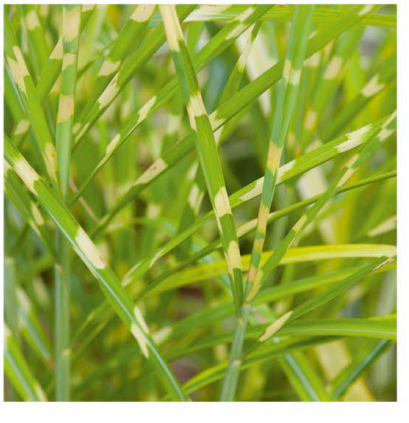
BOWLES' GOLDEN SEDGE
***Carex elata* 'Aurea'**
One of the best known and most widely grown of all sedges, *C. elata* 'Aurea' is deciduous, shedding its leaves in autumn. It forms an upright, arching fountain of golden-yellow leaves thinly edged in green, with small, blackish flower spikes in early summer. Preferring moist soils and part shade, it reaches a height of 75cm (30in).

PAMPAS GRASS
***Cortaderia selloana* 'Pumila'**
A "dwarf" pampas grass, 'Pumila' grows up to 1.4m (4ft) in height. With plain green leaves, it is a very robust and reliable evergreen, featuring stout stems and abundant, long-lasting flower plumes. Less vigorous than some pampas varieties, it mixes well with other plants. It prefers a sunny site with moist or well-drained soil.

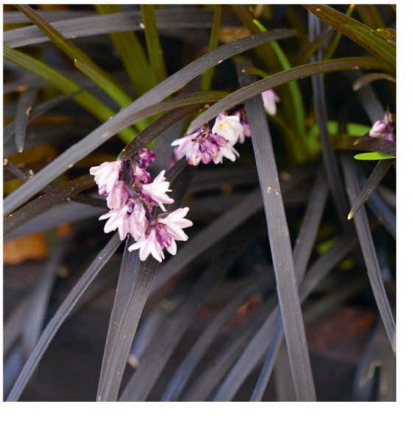
BLUE FESCUE
Festuca glauca
Fescues are small, narrow-leaved, tussock-forming, largely evergreen grasses common in upland and moorland areas. Blue fescue's leaf colour ranges from greyish-green to intense, silvery blue. Small flowers emerge blue and age to brown. It reaches a height of 30cm (12in) and prefers moist but well-drained soil in full sun or partial shade.

GOLDEN HAKONECHLOA
***Hakonechloa macra* 'Aureola'**
An elegant, slow-growing grass from Japan, golden hakonechloa has narrow, arching, green-striped, bright yellow leaves, often reddish-tinged in autumn and early winter. It looks magnificent in a tall container, which shows off its domed form. It grows to 25cm (10in) and prefers a moist but well-drained soil in full sun or partial shade.

JAPANESE BLOOD GRASS
***Imperata cylindrica* 'Rubra'**
One of the finest foliage plants available, Japanese blood grass has upright leaves that emerge red-tipped, the red spreading down the leaf in summer, and peaking in autumn. It reaches 45cm (18in), and in colder areas is best in a pot with winter protection. It likes a moist, well-drained soil in sun or partial shade. Remove old foliage in spring.



ZEBRA GRASS
***Miscanthus sinensis* 'Zebrinus'**
This striking, horizontally banded grass forms arching mounds of foliage up to 2.5m (8ft) tall. The banding is temperature dependent, so the grass may be green in spring but stripes should appear by midsummer. It is deciduous, and old foliage needs to be removed in spring. It thrives in sunny conditions in a moist, well-drained soil.



BLACK MONDO GRASS
***Ophiopogon planiscapus* 'Nigrescens'**
This is one of the few plants with truly black leaves. An evergreen that spreads slowly, it produces small, pale purple flowers in summer, then shiny, jet-black berries. It makes a modern edging to a border, and grows well in a pot. Reaching 15cm (6in), it likes full sun and part shade, and moist, well-drained soil.

SMALL
TREES

PLANTING A **TREE**

Although planting a tree is a fairly simple task, a little attention to detail and the appropriate aftercare ensure a tree will fulfil its potential. Trees are long-lived and prominent within the garden, as well as expensive to buy, so it is worth planting them right.

YOU WILL NEED

- tree in a container, eg apple tree
- spade and fork
- cane stick
- stake and mallet
- tree tie
- well-rotted garden compost
- watering can with fine sprayhead
- bucket
- secateurs

SEE ALSO

- **MOVING TREES** >> 168/169
- **CHOOSING TREES** >> 170/171

JARGON BUSTER

A **root ball** is the mass formed by the network of roots and the soil that surrounds them. In a potted plant, the root ball is largely made up of compost, with the roots starting to show through.

1 Soak the root ball of the tree in its container before planting. This will compensate for any water loss from the roots during the planting process and ensure that the tree settles into its position well.

2 With a spade, dig a planting hole about three times as wide as the diameter of the pot and 30cm (12in) deep (most root activity takes place in the top layer of soil). Lightly fork the base and sides of the hole.

If soil on the sides of the hole is compacted, loosen it with a fork

Soaking the plant in a bucket of water before removing it from its pot also helps to loosen the roots from the root ball

3 Check the hole is the correct depth by putting the pot in the hole and placing a cane across the top – it should rest on both sides of the hole and on the top of the root ball. You may need to add or remove soil in the hole.

4 Gently remove the root ball from its pot; the pot should slide off easily, leaving the root ball intact. Carefully tease out some of the larger encircling roots, to help the roots grow into the surrounding ground more successfully.

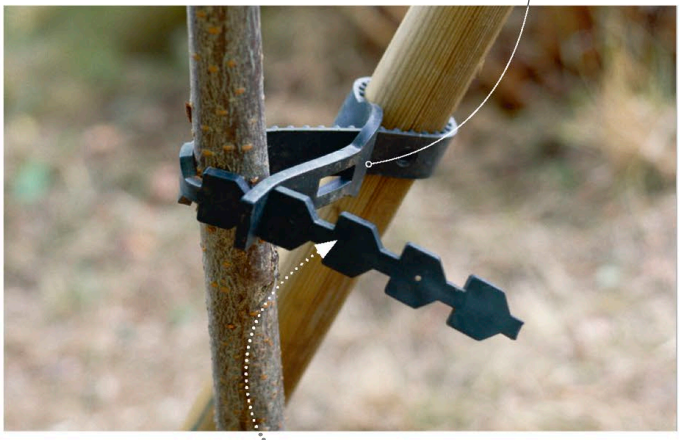
Try not to break the roots as they are teased out

CONTINUED ▷

5 Stand the tree in the hole, viewing it from different angles. When you are happy with its position, drive a stout stake into the ground close to the tree trunk and at a 45-degree angle to avoid damaging the roots. Make sure that the stake faces into the prevailing wind.

6 Water in well as you backfill the soil around the hole. Unless the soil is poor or sandy, do not add organic matter because this seems to prevent the roots spreading out in search of nutrients. Firm the soil in gently.

Make a figure of eight to hold the tree and the stake together



7 Tie the tree quite loosely to the stake with a tree tie, about 45cm (18in) from the ground, to allow the stem to flex in the wind. Check the tie regularly and loosen it as the tree girth expands, to prevent damage to the bark.

Water during dry spells during the first year or two

8 Water the tree well after planting and during dry periods for the first couple of seasons. Add a layer of well-rotted garden compost, about 8cm (3in) deep, around the tree. Keep the compost about 15cm (6in) away from the trunk.

9 Over the next two to three years, prune to form the shape of the tree. Use secateurs to remove damaged wood or growth that spoils the tree's shape, such as crossing, rubbing branches. Cut fairly close to the main stem.

Magnolias come in a variety of forms, with bold and beautiful goblet- or star-shaped flowers. Many are compact and make a perfect feature plant for a smaller garden or for a large pot.

REMOVING A **BRANCH**

If a branch is too large, too low, badly positioned, or diseased, it may need removing. Making careful, clean cuts will allow the tree to heal itself. Bad or rough cuts can allow disease to enter the wound, which can cause rotting, reducing the plant's potential lifespan.

YOU WILL NEED

- pruning saw
- garden gloves
- garden refuse bag

SEE ALSO

- **PRUNE WINTER STEMS** >> 130/131
- **PRUNING KNOW-HOW** >> 236/237

1 Identify the branch that needs to be removed. Try to remove growth when it is young, as the recovery is faster. Trees and shrubs will recover better from several small wounds than one large one.

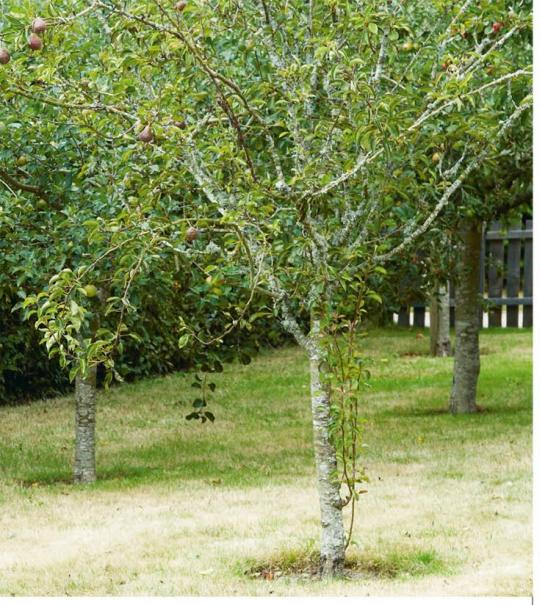
WORK IN PAIRS

When cutting a heavy branch, ask someone to help support the weight when you saw. This can stop the branch from swinging or tearing and falling, and damaging the plant or injuring yourself.

2 Make an undercut about 15cm (6in) away from the trunk halfway through the branch. Make another cut from the top, slightly further away from the trunk. This will remove the main part of the branch without tearing.

Cutting at an angle helps water to run off the cut, discouraging rot

3 Remove the remaining branch stub with a third cut, starting from the upper surface of the branch, just beyond the crease in the bark where the branch meets the trunk. Angle the cut away from the trunk. The cut surface will begin to shrink as the tree produces protective bark to cover it.



MOVING A **TREE OR SHRUB**

Occasionally it is necessary to move a tree or shrub. It may have outgrown its position or you may simply want to take it with you when you move house. Unless the job is urgent, it's best to wait until the plant is dormant in autumn or winter.

YOU WILL NEED

- spade and fork
- cane
- garden compost
- hessian, gardening bag, or old blanket
- watering can
- pruning clippers

SEE ALSO

- **PLANT A TREE** >> 160/163
- **REMOVE A BRANCH** >> 166/167

PREPARING TO MOVE

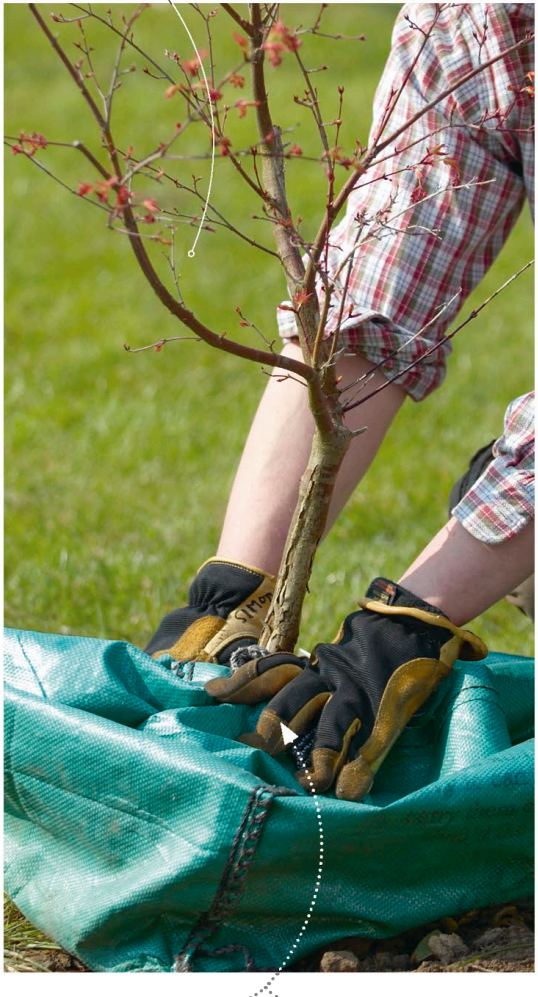
Moving can be stressful to trees and shrubs, so it is best done when they are dormant in autumn and winter. Lightly prune to remove dead wood before the move, but do not prune hard.

1 Clear the ground around the plant to allow for easy access and digging. Choose a dry, mild day when the soil is workable, rather than attempting to dig into ground that is waterlogged or frozen.

2 Prepare the new hole in advance so that the plant can be moved to its new position swiftly. Clear the area of weeds and make a circular hole large and deep enough to take the tree or shrub.

3 Carefully dig around the plant with a spade, trying to include as many of the fine roots as possible. As a rule of thumb, the roots should be as wide as the outer edge of the plant's canopy.

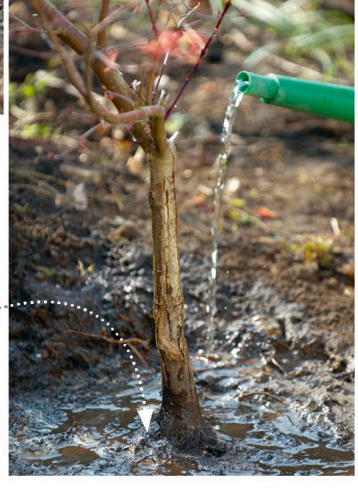
Small branches can be fragile so move the plant with care



4 Lift the plant out of the hole and wrap the roots up, ideally in wet hessian, but an old gardening bag or blanket will do. The idea is to prevent the roots from drying out, so transfer the plant to its new hole as soon as possible.

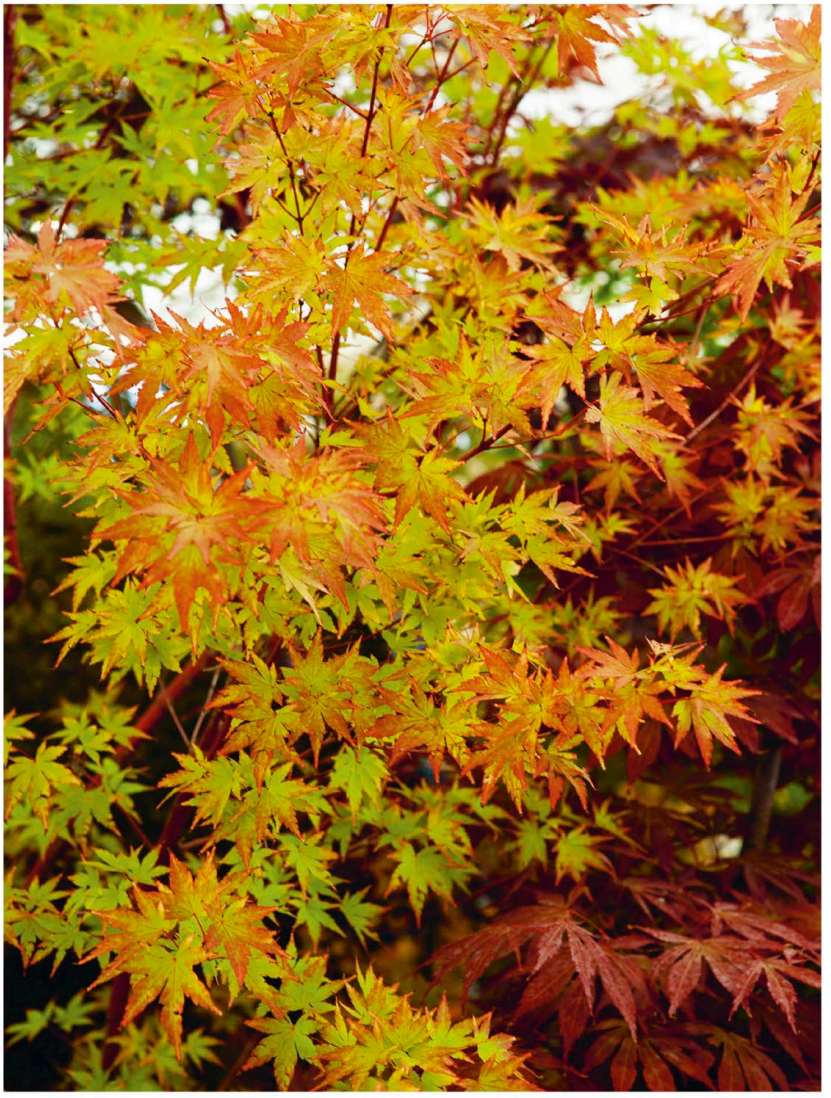
5 Place the plant in the new hole and use a cane to check the planting depth. Make sure that the tree or shrub is planted no deeper than before, adding or taking away soil from the bottom of the hole as needed.

6 Water the plant in well and continue to water for the following spring and summer. Apply a layer of mulch to retain moisture. If any branches die back after the move, prune them back to healthy wood. Keep the site free of weeds.



CHOOSING TREES
FOR SMALL GARDENS

This selection includes some of the most reliable and popular small trees. Many are chosen for their ornamental features, from the elegant flowers of the star magnolia to the firework-like leaves of the Japanese maple. This guide will help you to choose the right tree for the right spot.



JAPANESE MAPLE

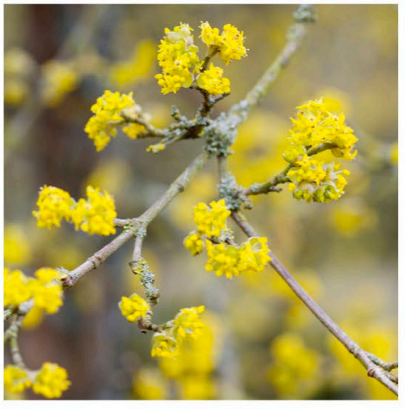
***Acer palmatum* 'Sango-kaku'**

Japanese maples are small trees or large shrubs with intricate or pretty leaves, and often fine autumn colour. 'Sango-kaku' (also called 'Senkaki') is known as the coral bark maple due to its orange-red branches and trunk, a beautiful winter feature. Its leaves open pinkish-yellow, becoming green in summer and yellow in autumn. It reaches 6m (20ft).

REDBUD

***Cercis canadensis* 'Forest Pansy'**

This striking, multi-stemmed tree has heart-shaped, deep red-purple foliage that turns to orange and bronze in autumn. Reaching up to 8m (26ft), 'Forest Pansy' bears clusters of small, pink flowers in spring before the leaves appear. It prefers fertile, moisture-retentive, well-drained soil in a sunny or partially shady position.



CORNELIAN CHERRY

Cornus mas

A small, spreading tree or shrub, Cornelian cherry has green oval leaves that turn purple in autumn. It produces clusters of tiny, bright yellow flowers in winter, followed by red, cherry-like fruit. Growing up to 4m (13ft), this tree is best planted in well-drained soil in sun or partial shade at the back of a border or as part of an informal hedge.

STAR MAGNOLIA

Magnolia stellata

This small tree, which grows up to 3m (10ft) tall, produces beautiful white, star-shaped flowers, which emerge before the dark-green, narrow, oval leaves, and can be vulnerable to spring frost. 'Rosea' has flowers with a rosy pink centre. It tolerates most soils that are moist but well drained, and prefers a sunny or partially shady spot.

CRAB APPLE

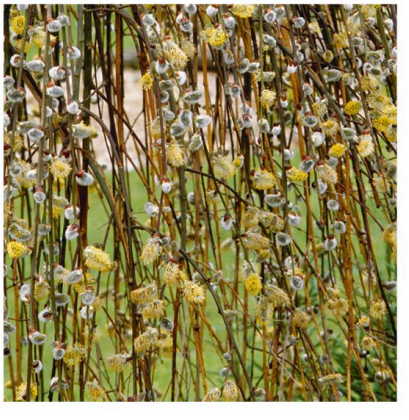
***Malus* 'John Downie'**

A vigorous, ornamental crab apple tree, 'John Downie' produces an abundance of bright red to orange-yellow crab apples in autumn. Reaching up to 10m (30ft), it has showy white spring blossom that is ideal for pollinating other apple trees nearby. Plant in a sunny position, although it tolerates partial shade, and in moderately fertile, well-drained soil.

CHINESE TUPELO

Nyssa sinensis

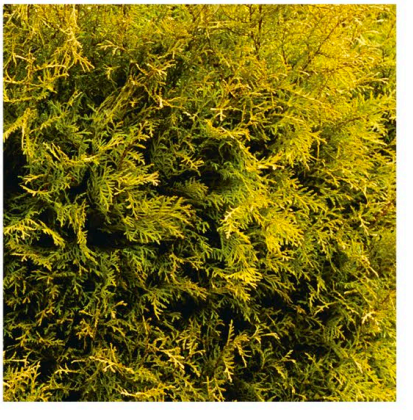
A tree or large shrub that reaches 8–12m (26–39ft), the Chinese tupelo has deciduous leaves that display a wide array of autumn colours from mellow yellows to fiery oranges and reds. The green-grey bark takes on an interesting flaky texture as it matures. Plant in full sun or partial shade, in fertile, well-drained, acidic soil.



KILMARNOCK WILLOW

***Salix caprea* 'Kilmarnock'**

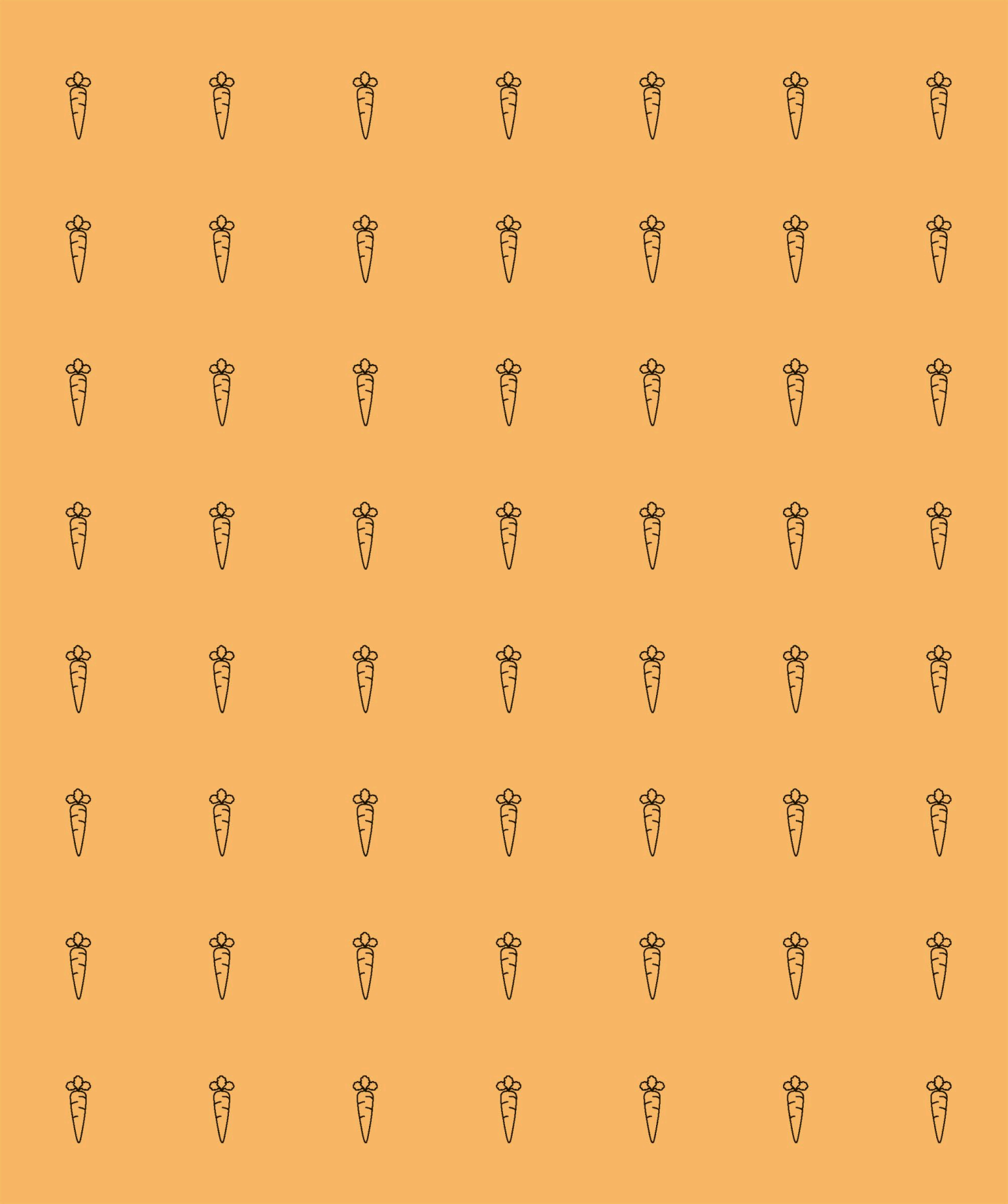
Forming a distinctive mushroom shape, this small willow has long, trailing branches. In late winter, silver-coloured "pussy willow" catkins appear. Thin out select stems and prune away dead wood to keep the head airy and maintain the shape of the tree. It can grow to about 2m (6ft) in height and spread and prefers well-drained soil in a sunny spot.



WHITE CEDAR

***Thuja occidentalis* 'Rheingold'**

This slow-growing evergreen conifer reaches up to 1–1.5m (3–5ft). Its bushy, bronze-tinged, amber-yellow foliage makes a lovely centrepiece in beds and borders. 'Rheingold' prefers moist, well-drained soil in full sun. The foliage becomes richer in colour in winter, but may need some protection from damaging, drying winds.



VEGETABLES

GROWING **SEEDS IN TRAYS**

Growing crops from seed is simple and economical, and sowing in trays is a good idea as they are easy to clean and reuse, and fit perfectly into propagators or on bright windowsills.

YOU WILL NEED

- vegetable seeds, eg lettuce, radish, spinach, or other salad vegetables
- detergent or sterilizing solution
- seed trays
- module trays
- seed compost or multi-purpose compost
- propagator
- watering can with fine sprayhead

SEE ALSO

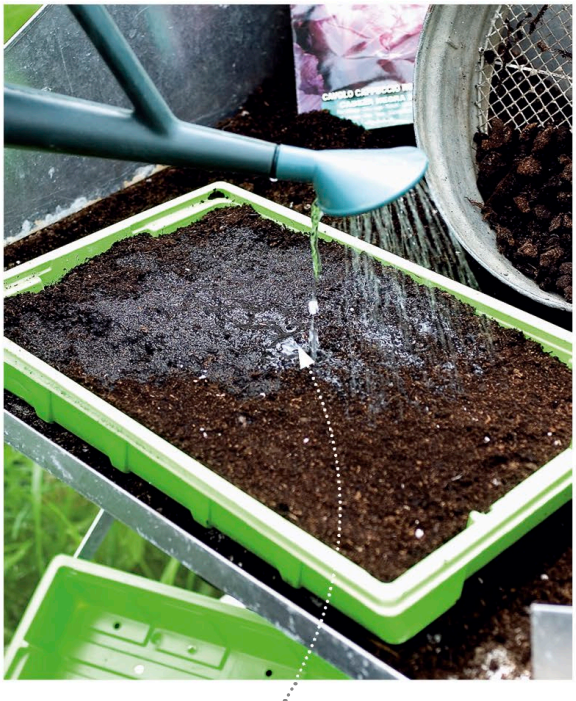
- **SOWING SEEDS OUTDOORS** >> 24/25
- **SEEDS IN POTS** >> 178/179
- **GROWING PLUG PLANTS** >> 180/181

JARGON BUSTER

Damping off is a fungal disease that affects seedlings, particularly those grown under cover. The fungus attacks stems, causing them to collapse and die. This is why it is vital to wash and sterilize trays if you are reusing them.

1 Fill a tray with multi-purpose or seed compost, and use a second tray to gently firm it to remove air pockets. You can clean and recycle food packaging to use as seed trays, with holes pierced in the bottom.

2 Scatter seeds evenly over the compost, either straight from the packet or sprinkling them from the palm of your hand. Sow thinly to prevent waste and overcrowding, which can result in spindly seedlings that are more prone to disease.



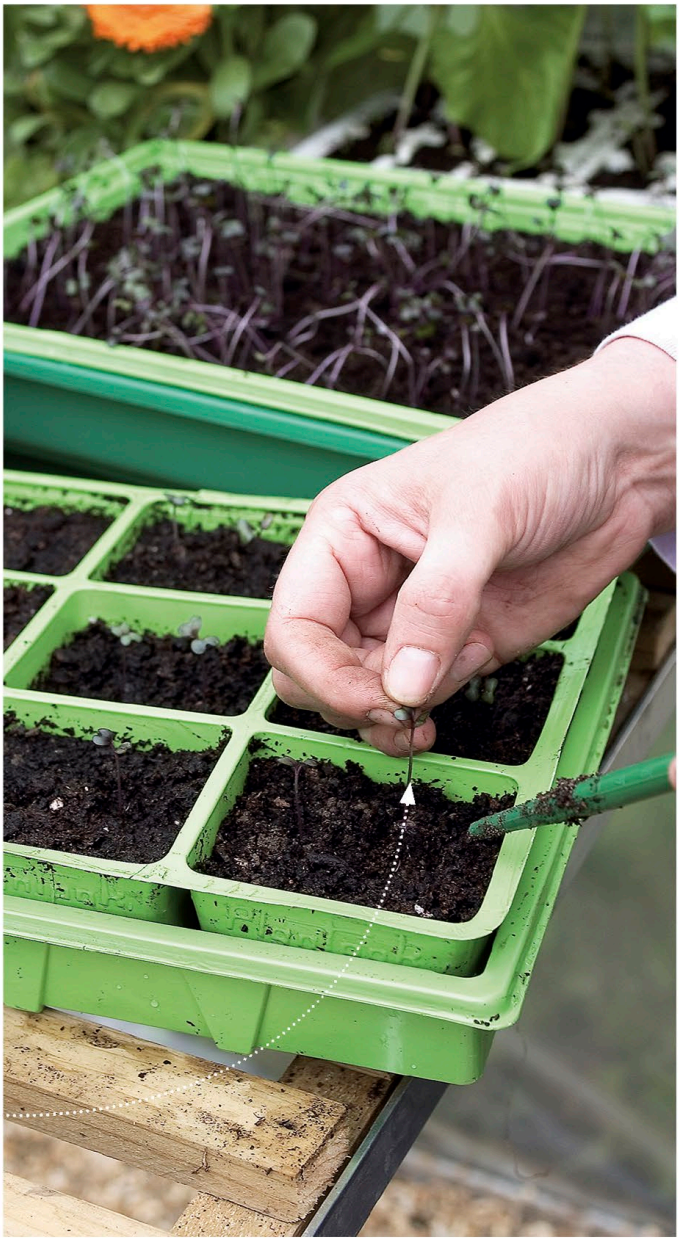
3 After lightly covering seeds with sieved compost, water gently with a sprinkling of tap water to avoid disturbing the seeds; avoid using stored rainwater, which can cause damping off disease. Label the tray with the plant name and date.

Humidity can encourage disease, so remove the lid once the seedlings have emerged

4 Place the tray in a propagator or cover it with clear plastic to create the warmth and humidity needed for germination. Keep in a light place, such as on a windowsill, but not in strong sun. Remove the cover as soon as seedlings emerge.

CONTINUED ▷

5 When the seedlings have a few leaves, transplant them into module trays or small pots. To do this, water the seedlings, then hold a seed leaf and loosen the roots with a dibber or pencil to gently tease each one from the compost.



6 Have ready module trays or small pots filled with multi-purpose compost, then water and allow them to drain. Make a hole using a dibber in each module, insert a seedling, and then gently firm. Water in and label.

7 After a few weeks, harden off the seedlings by gradually exposing them to the outdoor environment. Set them outside during the day and bring them in at night, or place them in a cold frame and gradually increase the ventilation.

A cold frame or greenhouse is best for seedlings to ensure that they also get enough light

SOWING SEEDS **IN SMALL POTS**

Make use of small pots to grow larger vegetable seeds. These single seedlings will grow on under cover with minimal disturbance before planting in the ground or a large container outdoors.

YOU WILL NEED

- larger seeds of your choice
- small pots
- multi-purpose or seed compost
- plant labels
- propagator, or clear plastic and elastic bands or string
- watering can with fine sprayhead

SEE ALSO

- **GROWING TOMATOES** >> 184/185
- **GROW CLIMBING BEANS** >> 186/187
- **GROW ROOT VEGETABLES** >> 190/191

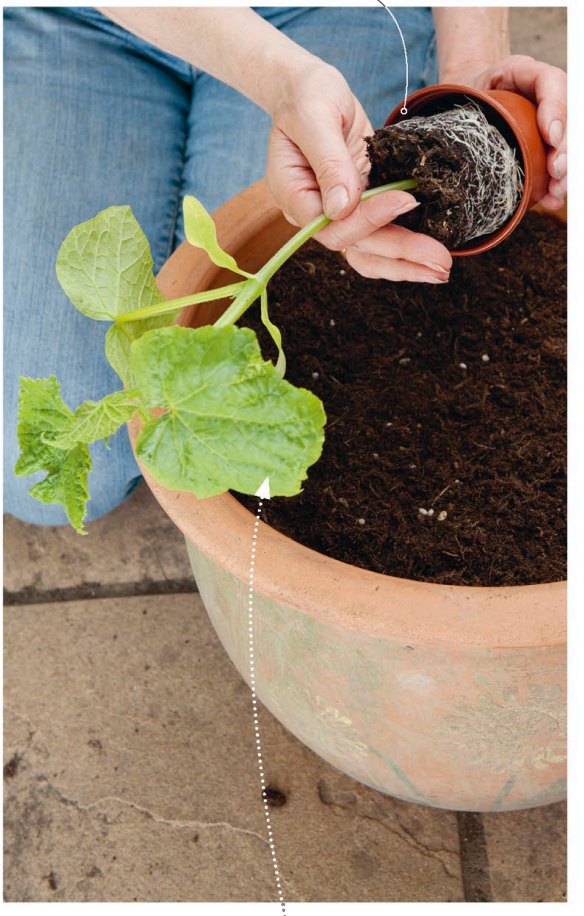
WATERING TRAYS

Water small pots by placing them in a tray of water until the compost surface feels damp, then remove and allow to drain. This helps to prevent seeds and seedlings from being disturbed.

1 Sowing in small pots works well for larger seeds and where fewer plants are required. Fill the pots with multi-purpose or seed compost, firm gently, and push the seed in to the correct planting depth. Label and water.

2 Cover pots with clear plastic, or put in a propagator until the seeds germinate. Keep pots moist and turn those on sunny windowsills daily to stop plants growing towards the light and ensure that they grow straighter.

Potbound plants, as shown here, may need roots teasing out before planting outdoors



3 Get plants gradually accustomed to being outdoors by placing them outside in the day and bringing them in at night. Plant them out into large pots or the ground before the roots become restricted, and water in well.

GROWING VEGETABLES **FROM PLUG PLANTS**

If space and time for growing vegetables from seed are tight, buy plug plants at garden centres or by mail order. These are seedlings with a small root system, ready to plant out. They are more expensive than seed and the choice of varieties is limited, but they do offer an easy way to get started.

YOU WILL NEED

- plug plants, eg courgette
- bark shavings
- plant labels
- support sticks or canes
- cloches (optional)
- watering can

SEE ALSO

- **GROWING TOMATOES** >> 184/185
- **GROWING POTATOES** >> 192/193

JARGON BUSTER

Cloches are large, transparent, bell-shaped structures that can be placed over individual plants to protect against cold and windy weather. They are also useful to ward off slugs and snails, and other pests.

Once made of glass, cloches are now available in plastic, and are lightweight and portable.

Plug plants are vulnerable once removed from packaging so be ready to plant immediately

1 Buy compact, green plants with a healthy root system. Water well and plant out or pot on immediately to avoid checking their growth. Beware of buying courgettes and other half-hardy plants before the risk of frost has passed.

2 Carefully remove each seedling from its packaging and, holding the root ball rather than the delicate leaves, plant it into prepared soil so that the top of the root ball is just below soil level.

3 Gently firm the soil around each plant so that it is stable, and water well to help it get established. Add a mulch of organic material around each plant (but not touching the stem) to retain soil moisture and prevent weeds.

4 Label, and add supports for plants that need them as they grow. Cloches are often useful to protect young plants from cold and windy weather. Continue to water the plants regularly until they are established.

RAISING LETTUCES **ON A WINDOWSILL**

For fresh salad leaves to hand whenever you need them, sow cut-and-come-again lettuces on a kitchen windowsill. Loose-leaf lettuces can be sown thickly, the baby leaves cut, and stumps allowed to regrow.

YOU WILL NEED

- loose-leaf lettuce seeds
- multi-purpose compost
- long, slim pots or fabric bags
- woven willow surrounds
- pencil or dibber
- watering can with fine sprayhead

SEE ALSO

- **GROWING PLUG PLANTS** >> 180/181
- **GROW CLIMBING BEANS** >> 186/187
- **GROW ROOT VEGETABLES** >> 190/191

LETTUCES THAT NEED MORE SPACE

Butterhead, cos, and crisphead lettuces develop dense central hearts of leaves. Sow seed in trays and plant out seedlings 20–30cm (8–12in) apart.

1 Long, slim pots or fabric bags fit snugly onto a windowsill and look attractive with woven willow surrounds. Fill them with compost to about 1cm (1/2in) below the rim and make drills in the compost 1/2cm (1/4in) deep and 5cm (2in) apart.

2 Pour seed into the palm of your hand and sprinkle it into each drill using your thumb and forefinger. Cover seeds lightly with compost and water using a can with a fine sprayhead to avoid disturbing the seeds.

3 Keep the compost moist and when the seedlings are 5–10cm (2–4in) in height, cut them as required, about 2.5cm (1in) above soil level. The plants should then sprout new leaves, which can be harvested about two weeks later.

Lettuces can be cut to the stump to regrow two or three times

GROWING **TOMATOES**

Home-grown tomatoes taste divine straight from the vine, and make beautiful displays when dripping with fruit. Sow seed indoors in early spring and pot on as plants grow, or buy young plants in late spring.

YOU WILL NEED

- tomato plants, such as the cordon varieties shown here
- large pot
- multi-purpose compost
- canes
- garden twine
- liquid tomato fertilizer
- watering can

SEE ALSO

- **WINDOWSILL LETTUCES** >> 182/183
- **GROW CLIMBING BEANS** >> 186/187

JARGON BUSTER

Cordon varieties are tall and need staking, while **bush varieties** are a bit more compact.

Cherry tomatoes will ripen outdoors, while larger types like **beefsteaks** are more productive when grown under cover.

1 Once nights are frost free and plants are acclimatized to being outdoors, fill a pot, at least 25cm (10in) wide, with compost to 5cm (2in) below the rim. Plant the tomato deeply, as the section of buried stem will send out extra roots.

2 Tall cordon cultivars need training up a support. Push a couple of long bamboo canes or other stakes into the compost and tie in the main stem to keep the plant stable. Bush and trailing types do not need supports.

Make sure the pot is cleaned before using to plant your tomatoes

3 As the plant grows, tie the main stems loosely to the canes using garden twine. Pinch out fast-growing side shoots growing between the leaves and main stem on cordon cultivars. Leave side shoots to develop on bush types.

Pinching out also helps to stimulate new growth

4 Water regularly. When the first fruits appear, feed weekly with a tomato fertilizer, and add extra compost if the roots become exposed. Pinch out the growing tip as the plant reaches the top of its cane. Ripe fruits twist off easily.

GROWING
CLIMBING BEANS

Climbing French beans and runner beans grow best in a rich, fertile soil, so prepare your site by digging in plenty of well-rotted organic matter at least two weeks before planting. Grow companion plants nearby, such as sweet peas, to attract pollinating insects to the garden.

YOU WILL NEED

- bean seeds, eg runner beans, climbing French beans
- sweet pea plants
- 8 bamboo canes 2.2m (7ft) long
- garden twine
- watering can

SEE ALSO

- **GROWING TOMATOES** >> 184/185
- **GROW ROOT VEGETABLES** >> 190/191
- **GROWING POTATOES** >> 192/193

JARGON BUSTER

Companion planting in vegetable gardening is when different types of plants are grown nearby to benefit each other or a particular crop.

For example, scented sweet peas are used here to attract pollinating insects for the benefit of both the sweet peas and the climbing beans.

1 Support is vital for these climbing plants. Build a wigwam from eight canes, ideally at least 2.2m (7ft) long, pushed firmly into the soil about 30cm (12in) apart, in a circle. Tie the canes securely at the top and again halfway down.

Runner beans are best sown from mid-May to July

2 From late spring, when the soil is at least 12°C (54°F), plant two seeds at a depth of 5cm (2in) by each cane and water thoroughly. In cold areas or where the soil is heavy, sow the seeds in deep pots indoors in mid-spring.

3 After germination, remove the weaker seedling. Twist the remaining plant around its cane and tie it in with twine. A companion sweet pea plant will attract pollinating insects to the runner bean flowers, promoting a good crop.

4 It is important to pick beans regularly (at least twice a week), when they are young and tender, because over-mature pods are less appetizing and suppress the formation of new flowers.

Tomatoes taste so much better when picked fresh from your own garden for summer salads and sandwiches. They are cheap, easy to cultivate, and can be grown in containers in a small garden or even on a balcony.

GROWING **ROOT CROPS**

Easy to grow and wonderfully sweet when scrubbed and eaten fresh, most root crops thrive when sown outdoors, the seedlings thinned, and crops watered regularly. If you are sowing them in containers, choose deep pots with room for the roots to develop.

YOU WILL NEED

- vegetable seeds, eg carrots and radishes, shown here
- large, deep containers, eg pots or growing bags
- multi-purpose compost
- scissors
- garden fleece
- sticks or chopsticks

SEE ALSO

- **SOWING SEEDS OUTDOORS** >> 24/25
- **WINDOWSILL LETTUCES** >> 182/183

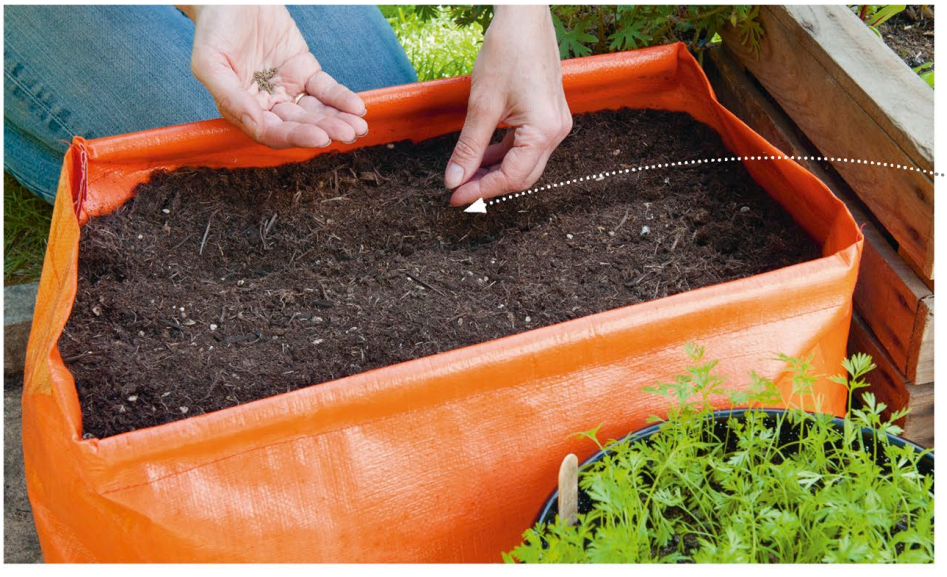
WINTER RADISHES

Larger winter cultivars of radishes are slower to mature, and should be sown from mid- to late summer. Winter roots, such as 'Mantanghong', can take several months until they are ready to harvest.

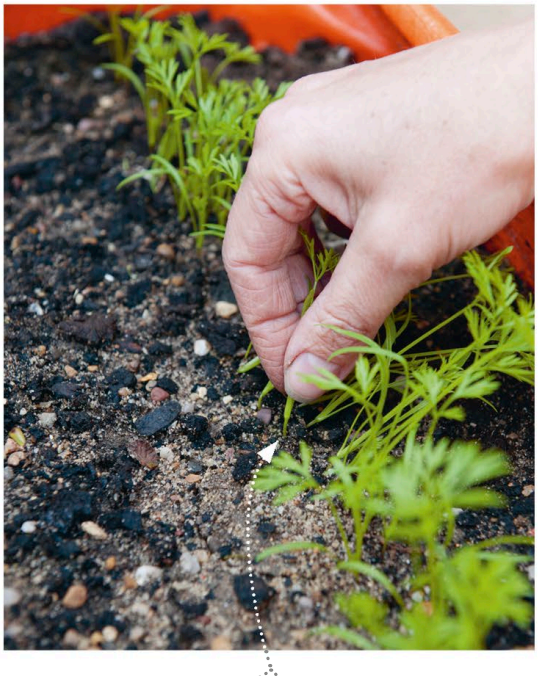
GROWING RADISHES

Summer radishes An ideal crop for beginners, radishes are undemanding, fast growing, and delicious when freshly picked. Sow summer cultivars outdoors from early spring until late autumn. Scatter seeds thinly or sow in rows 5cm (2in) apart at a depth of about 1cm (½in). When the seedlings appear, thin radishes promptly to make space for rapid growth: space summer radishes 2cm (1in) apart and keep pots well watered.

GROWING CARROTS

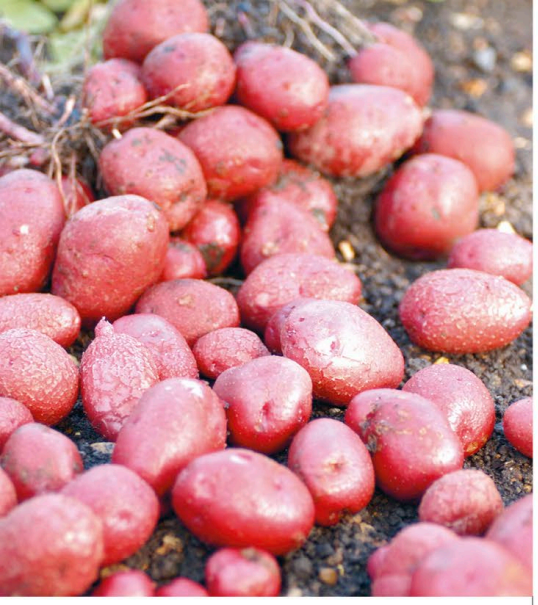


1 Large, deep containers, such as these bags, are ideal for growing carrots. Ensure that the compost surface is level and make a shallow drill about 1cm (½in) deep, sow seeds thinly along it, cover with compost, and water well.



2 When the seedlings have their first divided leaves, thin them to about 5cm (2in) apart, either by pulling them up between your fingers or by snipping off the plants with scissors at soil level. Remove and compost all thinnings.

3 Carrot flies fly close to the ground and can be prevented from reaching your crops by creating a barrier with fleece that, together with the pot, is 60cm (24in) high, or by raising the container the same height off the ground.



GROWING
EARLY POTATOES

Potatoes are easy to grow and usually ready to harvest after they have flowered. At 10–12 weeks, pull some soil aside to check whether the tubers are ready, and lift the roots carefully with a fork.

YOU WILL NEED

- sprouted ("chitted") seed potatoes
- egg boxes
- garden string
- sticks for markers
- spade
- rake
- general-purpose fertilizer

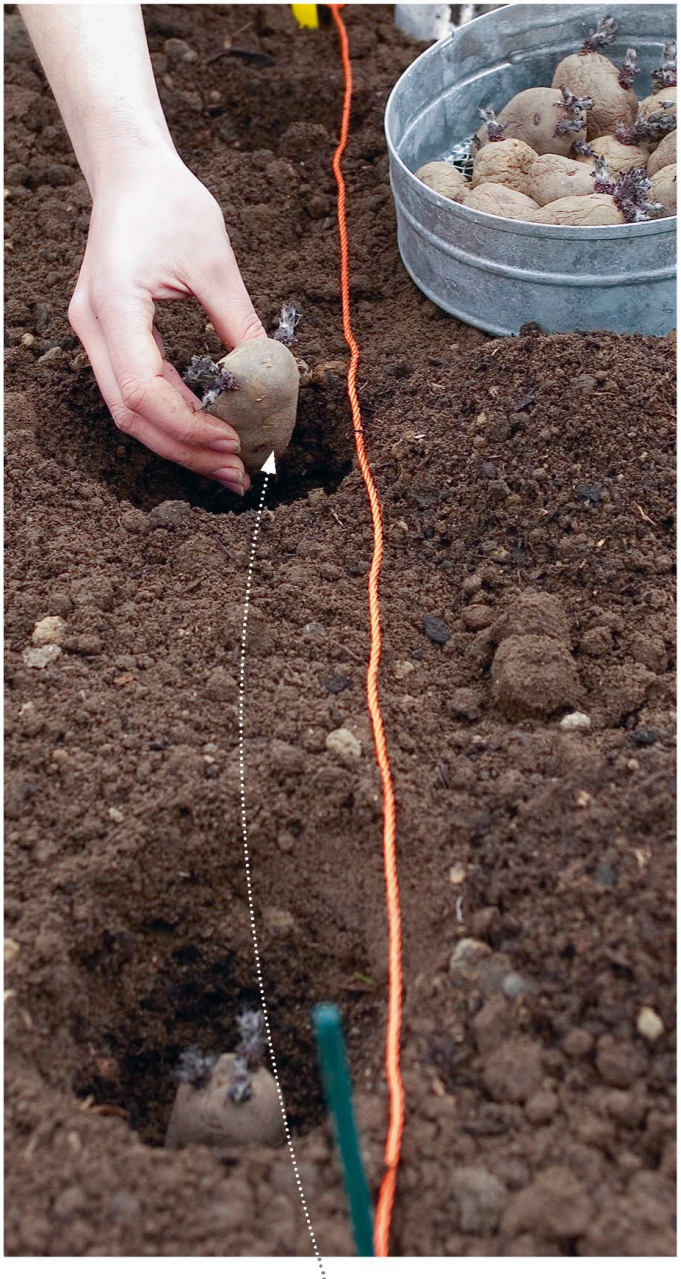
SEE ALSO

- **POTATOES IN A BIN** >> 194/195
- **DEAL WITH PESTS** >> 244/245

1 In late winter, place your seed potatoes in egg boxes or trays with the maximum number of buds (eyes) pointing upwards. Stand the boxes in a cool, light place indoors for about six weeks to produce sturdy, dark sprouts (chitting).

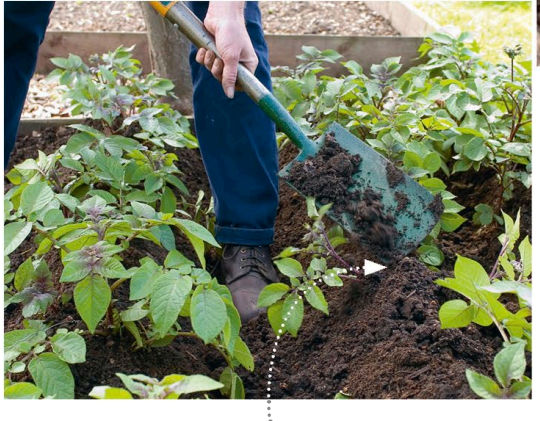
SEED POTATOES

Available from late winter, seed potatoes look like ordinary potatoes but are certified free of viruses. Buy them from a local garden centre or supplier. All potatoes grow better after "chitting", shown in step 1.



2 When shoots reach about 2.5cm (1in) long, in early spring, mark a row on prepared soil. At 30cm (12in) intervals dig holes about 10cm (4in) deep and plant a single tuber in each, with its shoots pointing upwards.

3 Fill each hole with soil, rake over the row, and mark its position. A general-purpose fertilizer can also be applied at the specified rate on either side of the row at this stage, or it may be worked into the soil before planting.



4 Tubers exposed to light will turn green, making them toxic and inedible. To avoid this, earth up the plants as they emerge by mounding soil around their stems to a height of around 15cm (6in).

GROWING **POTATOES** IN A BIN

Potatoes taste best when freshly harvested. Grow them in deep pots or bins, and plant "earlies", "second earlies", and "maincrops" for tubers in separate bins so that you can harvest crops over a long period.

YOU WILL NEED

- sprouted ("chitted") potatoes
- egg boxes
- large bin
- multi-purpose compost
- watering can

SEE ALSO

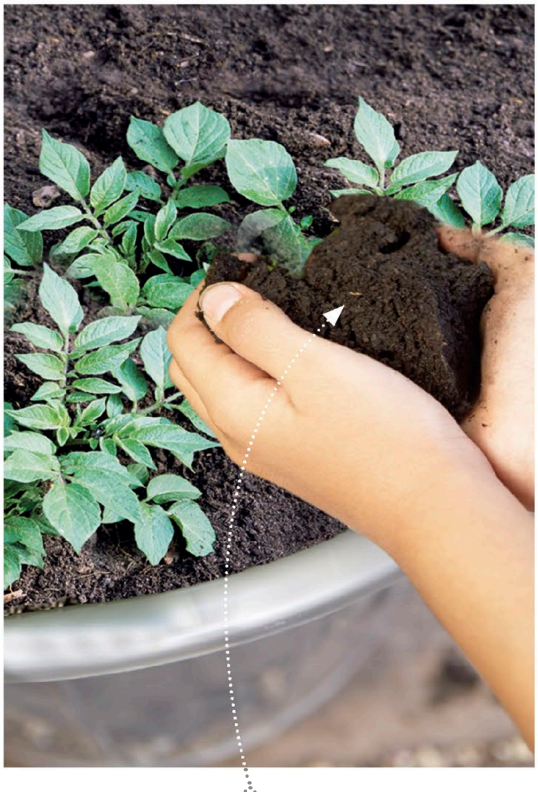
- **WINDOWSILL LETTUCES** >> 182/183
- **HERB HANGING BASKET** >> 206/207

1 Sprout ("chit") potatoes before planting. In early spring, place seed potatoes in egg boxes, with the end with the most eyes facing upwards, and set them on a cool windowsill. Plant when the shoots are 2cm (3/4in) long.

WATER REGULARLY

The large, leafy potato plants and developing tubers need a reliable supply of water to produce a good harvest. Keep compost moist but not wet, and make sure bins have holes in the bottom for drainage.

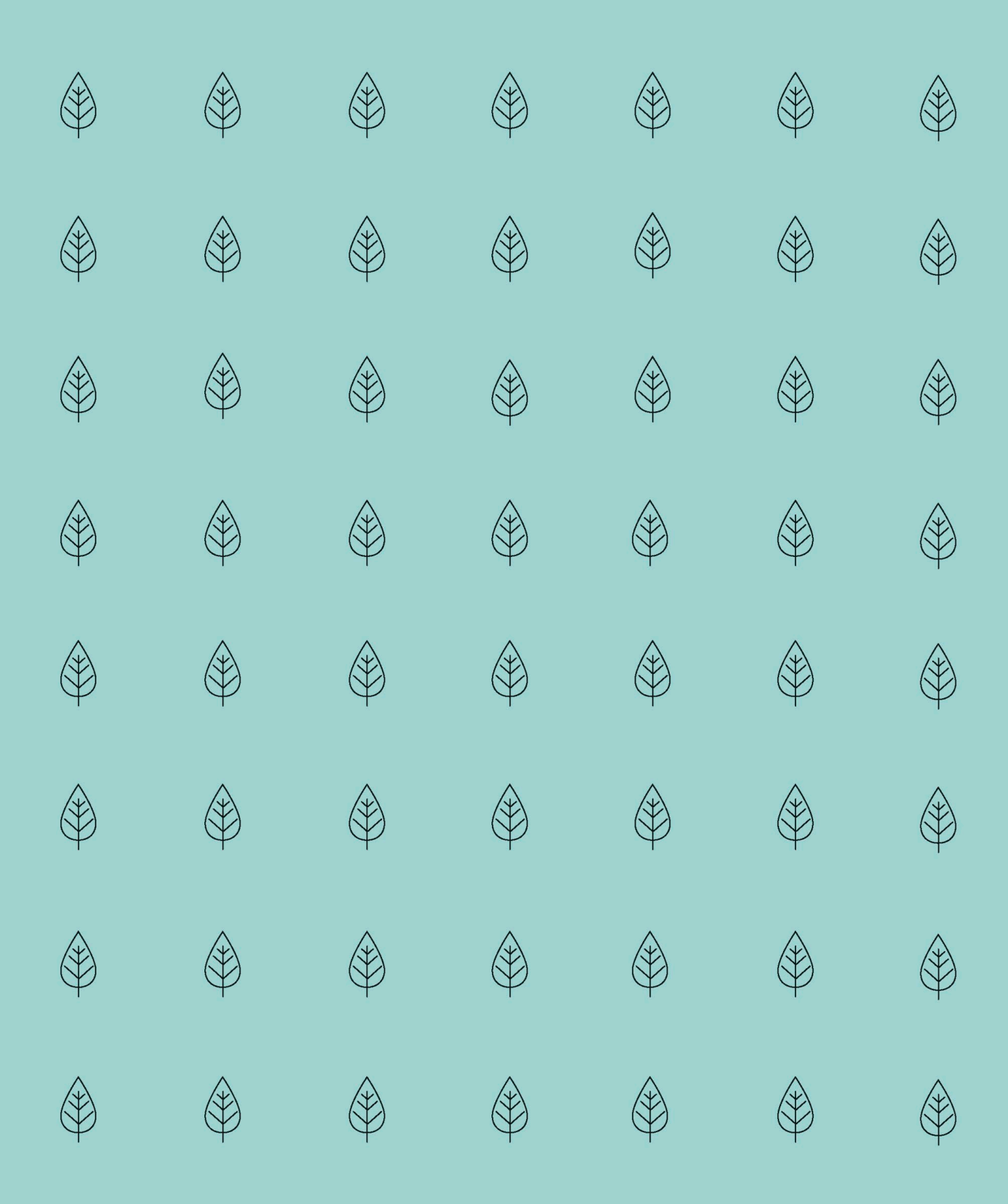
2 From mid- to late spring, make drainage holes in the base of the bin and fill a third with compost. Evenly space five potatoes, or fewer, on the surface, shoots pointing up. Cover with 15cm (6in) of compost and water well.

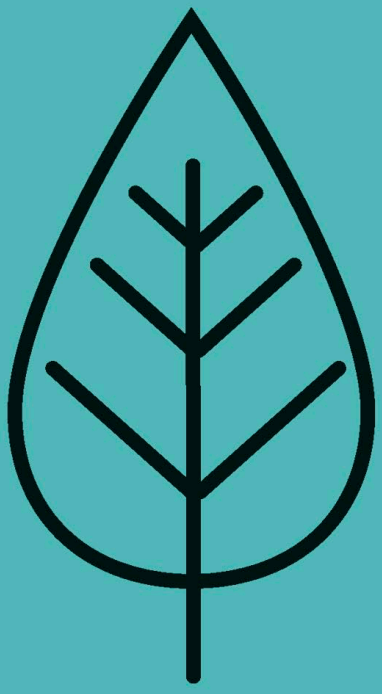


3 Add compost around the plants in stages as they grow until the bin is full. Known as "earthing up", this encourages more tubers to form, prevents them turning green and poisonous on exposure to light, and reduces frost damage.

Even three seed potatoes, if using a smaller bin, will produce a good crop

4 With consistent watering, potatoes should be ready to crop when the plants flower. Empty the bin and harvest the tubers all at once or allow plants to continue growing and pick through the compost to take what you need.





HERBS

GROWING
HERBS FROM SEED

Garden catalogues list thousands of different seeds and make for stimulating reading – especially over the winter. Many seeds are easy to grow, and starting from seed is an inexpensive way to expand your collection of both basic and unusual herbs.

YOU WILL NEED

- packets of seeds of your choice, eg basil, chervil, coriander, dill, lemon verbena, and parsley
- selection of small-sized pots and module trays
- seed or fine compost
- vermiculite
- watering can with fine sprayhead

SEE ALSO

- **A HERB GARDEN** >> 204/205
- **GROW HERB CUTTINGS** >> 210/213
- **DIVIDING HERBS** >> 214/215

JARGON BUSTER

Vermiculite is a naturally occurring mineral that helps to retain moisture and nutrients in the soil.

It also provides insulation for seeds as they grow and develop.

LARGER SEEDS

1 Seeds of this size are the easiest to handle. Check the instructions, make sure your palm is dry, and gently scatter at the correct spacing. Use just enough and return the rest to the packet.

2 Planting depth and light requirements vary for each type of herb. Follow the packet's instructions and scatter an appropriate depth of vermiculite over the seeds.

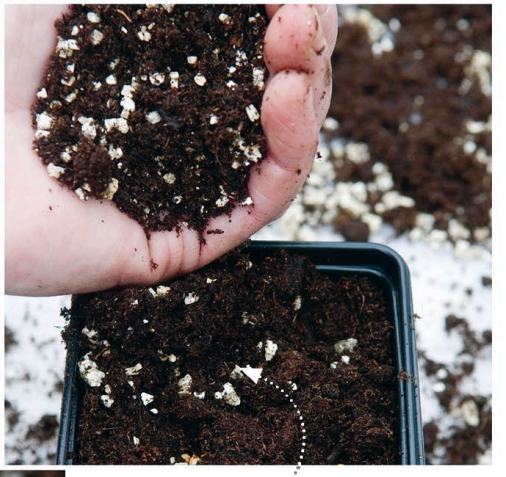
3 Use a waterproof pen to label the pot. It is useful to record the date of sowing so that you can check for signs of growth at the supplier's suggested times.

DIPPING HOLES

1 For seeds that need to be accurately spaced and at a greater depth, use your fingertips to make indentations in the compost at a suitable depth and distance apart.

When pressing down on compost, also check moisture levels

2 With big seeds, place one or two in each hole, but with smaller seeds, put in a few more each time. Try not to drop them from high up as they can bounce and be easily lost.



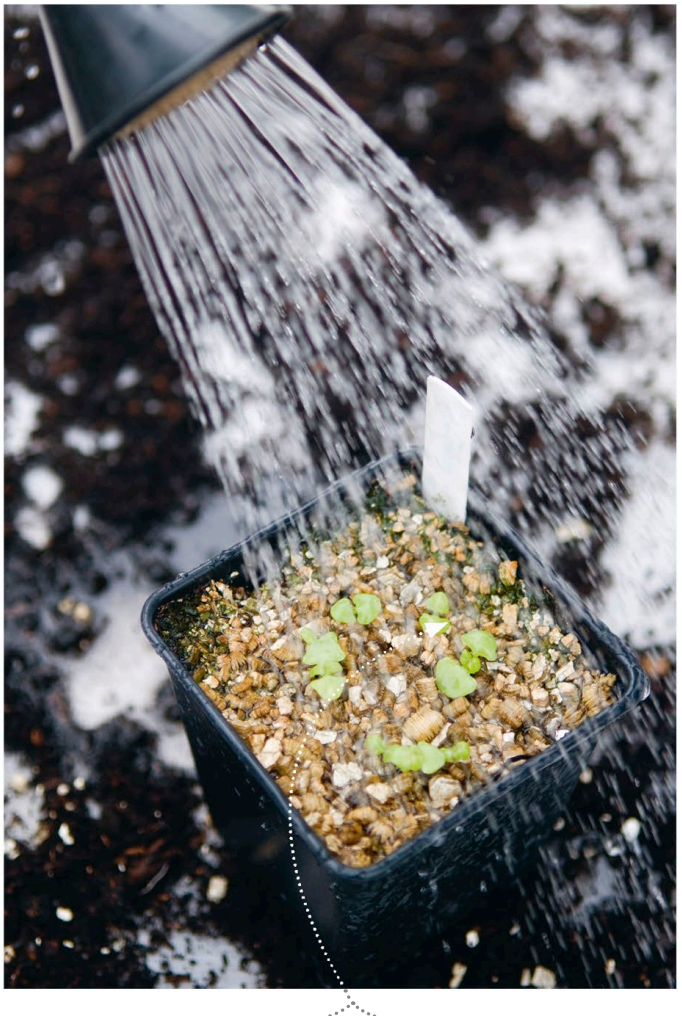
3 Cover with a 50:50 vermiculite and fine compost mix. Gently firm, label, and water carefully. Place in a warm, light place. Keep barely moist and check regularly for signs of growing seedlings.

CONTINUED ▷

FINE SEEDS

1 Lightly dust the seed from your palm or "pinch" a small amount between finger and thumb and carefully sprinkle it. Don't sow more seeds in a single pot than advised on the packet instructions.

2 Finer seeds need a lighter covering of vermiculite using a finer grade, and some need to be left exposed. Avoid overwatering as too much can flush seeds into one corner.



3 Remember to water your seedlings and continue growing them in a bright airy place. If the right numbers of seeds are sown in the right container, no pricking out will be needed, just potting up later on.

SOWING PLUGS

1 Trays come in sizes from four large plugs to many hundreds of small 1cm (½in) squares, and are ideal for sowing seeds where you only need one or two plants to grow in each module. It is usually best to avoid sowing thickly. Dense sowing results in seedlings that are weak and more susceptible to disease.

2 So you don't lose track of where you are, sow larger seeds on the surface of all the modules and then press them down to the correct depth before covering in one go.

Fine compost is easy for seeds to push through

3 Pinch out excess seedlings, leaving the strongest with plenty of space to grow on. Pot up into a larger container or plant out when the plug is well filled with roots.

Culinary seedlings that are pinched out can be used up in cooking in the kitchen

Herbs such as tarragon, rosemary, sage, and bay are easy to grow and suit town and country gardens. Many can provide fragrance all year round, and colour from spring to late summer.

PLANTING A **HERB GARDEN**

This formal herb feature takes only a day to build and a season to mature. Here, bricks have been used to edge the beds and divide them into quarters. A potted bay tree forms the centrepiece.

YOU WILL NEED

- pot-grown herbs, eg bay tree, camomile, chives, rosemary, sage, thyme
- garden pegs and string
- bricks
- hammer
- garden compost
- watering can

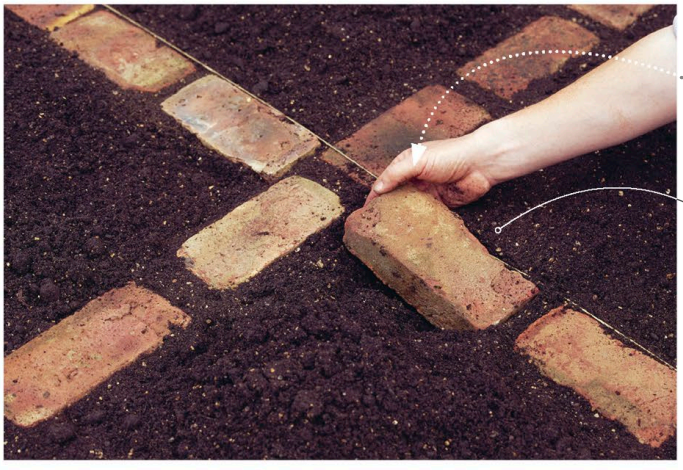
SEE ALSO

- **HERBS FROM SEED** >> 198/201
- **GROW HERB CUTTINGS** >> 210/213
- **DIVIDING HERBS** >> 214/215

COMMON HERBS

Commonly grown culinary herbs include basil, chervil, coriander, dill, marjoram, oregano, parsley, sage, and wild rocket. Some herbs, such as mint, can quickly take over a herb garden so are best confined in pots.

1 Mark out a cross with pegs and string. Dig trenches following the string lines, slightly wider and not quite as deep as the bricks to allow space for the bricks to settle. Use a hammer handle to firm in the bricks.



2 Finish the last quarter and bed the bricks down securely, packing the soil firmly against them (no need to mortar them in). If you wish to have a plant in the centre of the feature, make sure that you leave space for it.

This is a handy way to use up old or spare bricks in a herb garden

3 Arrange the plants in their pots before they go in the ground, so you can adjust the spacing if required. Water each plant thoroughly before removing it from its pot. Make planting holes and insert the plants. Water in well.

Bay needs regular clipping as it can get very big and quickly outgrow its space

4 Finish off the design with a central plant – a bay tree, which can be clipped into shape, has been used here. Water all the plants regularly until they are fully established, especially in hot, dry weather.

PLANTING A HERB **HANGING BASKET**

Edible and aromatic herbs can look spectacular in a hanging basket that is planted with a range of leaf colours and textures. Hang it near the kitchen or barbecue for tempting smells and a readily accessible herb garden.

YOU WILL NEED

- herbs, eg basil, silver thyme, chives
- hanging basket, hook, and liner
- garden compost
- small hand trowel
- skewers
- watering can

SEE ALSO

- **A HERB GARDEN** >> 204/205
- **GROW HERB CUTTINGS** >> 210/213

HERB NEIGHBOURS

With limited space, choose herbs for your hanging basket that you are most likely to use or enjoy for their taste or aroma. For example, try tarragon, chives, and oregano. Avoid large, woody herbs such as bay and rosemary.

1 Check that the basket has a good number of drainage holes in the base and sides – a skewer pushed through the liner several times from the outside will help. Partially fill with top-quality fresh compost and gently firm.

Break up compost with your hands if it is lumpy

2 Carefully remove the plants from their pots and if the roots are congested, gently tease them out a little. Arrange and space out the hardy herbs first, filling larger gaps with tender herbs such as basil.

3 Add more fresh compost around the roots, gently firming down in stages, until the herbs are at the same planting level as in their pots. Trim back any damaged stems or bruised leaves and use in cooking.

Silver-leaved foliage adds contrast

4 Water your basket well before hanging it, and check that excess moisture drains away. Choose a sunny spot. Select a robust hook and hang carefully as large baskets can be very heavy, especially when wet.

MAKING A **LAVENDER HEDGE**

Attractive to look at and much loved by bees and butterflies, this aromatic feature is easy to grow, requiring no feeding and little maintenance beyond an annual clip as the flowers begin to fade.

YOU WILL NEED

- lavender plants, eg 'Hidcote' or 'Munstead' varieties
- spade
- small garden trowel
- coarse grit
- watering can

SEE ALSO

- **A HERB GARDEN** >> 204/205
- **PRUNING LAVENDER** >> 128/129

PRESS IN YOUNG PLANTS

Young plants need to be firmly planted. Do this by gently pressing soil in towards the roots themselves rather than pressing downwards on the root ball.

1 Thoroughly dig over the ground, removing large stones and all traces of stubborn weeds. Add coarse grit to heavy soil, but do not add any fertilizer or bulky organic matter unless your soil is very sandy.

Tease out the roots slightly at the base of the root ball

2 Dig holes a little larger than the plant pots and, when using larger lavenders such as 'Hidcote' or 'Munstead', space your plants about 30–40cm (12–16in) apart. Space smaller varieties 25cm (10in) apart.

3 Firm in your plants so the soil is at the same level as the compost. On heavy or wet soil, place the plants 2cm (¾in) proud of the surrounding soil and add a layer of coarse grit sufficient to just cover the plant's root ball.

4 Water in well immediately after planting and keep moist over their first summer or until established, but don't overwater lavender. Avoid pouring water over the top of the plant, and direct it instead to the surrounding soil at the base.

GROWING HERBS **FROM CUTTINGS**

Many plants do not produce viable seed or, if they do, it is so fiddly or slow to grow that it is easier and quicker to take cuttings from your favourite plant. Always keep your new cuttings moist and in a warm, sunny place.

YOU WILL NEED

- cuttings from plants, eg rosemary, camomile, thyme, mint
- small plant pots and module trays
- small secateurs or scissors
- fine compost
- vermiculite
- watering can with fine sprayhead

SEE ALSO

- **HERBS FROM SEED** >> 198/201
- **A HERB GARDEN** >> 204/205
- **DIVIDING HERBS** >> 214/215

JARGON BUSTER

Softwood cuttings are the soft and pliable young shoots of a plant or shrub.

Woodier cuttings are taken from slightly thicker, woody stems.

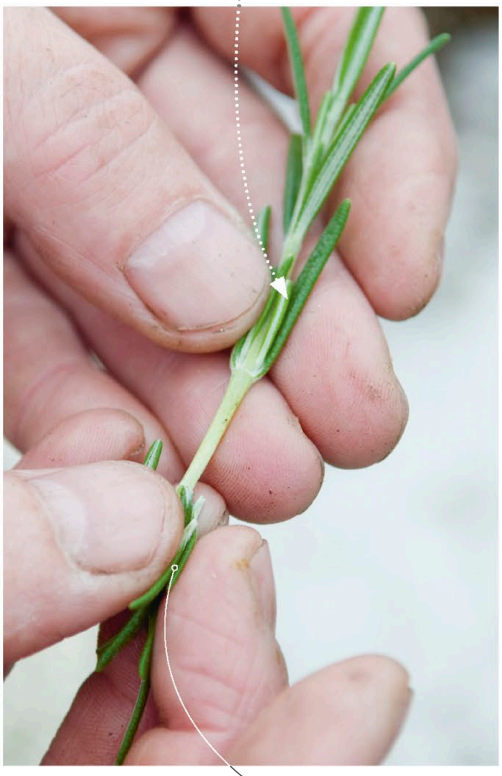
Aerial roots are roots that form above the ground.

Suckers are new shoots that spring up directly from the roots.

SOFTWOOD CUTTINGS

1 In late summer, select a non-flowering shoot 7.5–10cm (3–4in) long from a healthy-looking plant. Try to avoid any stems that are too young and soft as these are more difficult to root.

2 Cut just below a leaf node using clean, sharp snippers and remove the leaves from the bottom half of the cutting. Prepare one cutting at a time so that it does not dry out and deteriorate.



Use your fingertips to feel for the knobby leaf node that holds leaves on a plant

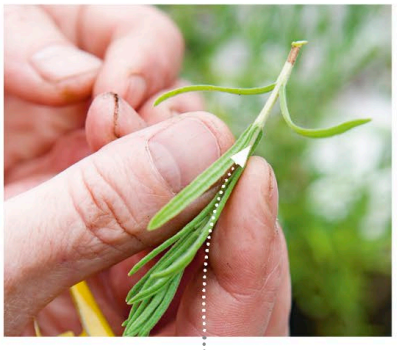
3 Insert the cutting 3–4cm (1¼–1¾in) deep into a 50:50 vermiculite and fine compost mix. If the cutting bends too easily, it is too young or the compost is too coarse. Water well.

Clear any debris from the compost such as small twiggy strands

CONTINUED ▷

WOODIER CUTTINGS

1 Select a firm, slightly woody, non-flowering side shoot 5–10cm (2–4in) long and gently cut or pull it away from the main stem so a sliver of bark remains on the cutting.



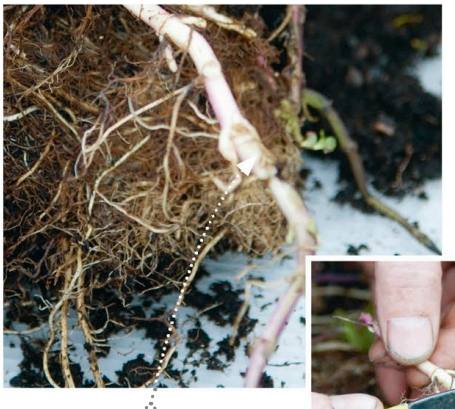
2 Trim any wispy strands from the heel and carefully remove all the leaves from the lower half. Insert the cutting into a 50:50 vermiculite and fine compost mix. Water well.

LAZY CUTTINGS

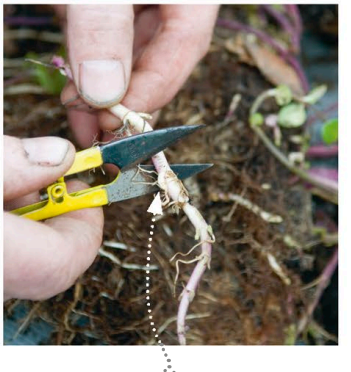
Look carefully at the underside of herbs such as camomile and thyme and you will see aerial roots growing from their stems. These stems will develop happily if detached and grown on in their own plug or pot.

ROOT CUTTINGS

1 For herbs with invasive roots, such as mint, divide the parent plant into good-sized portions with large fleshy roots for potting up individually. Do not reuse the old compost.



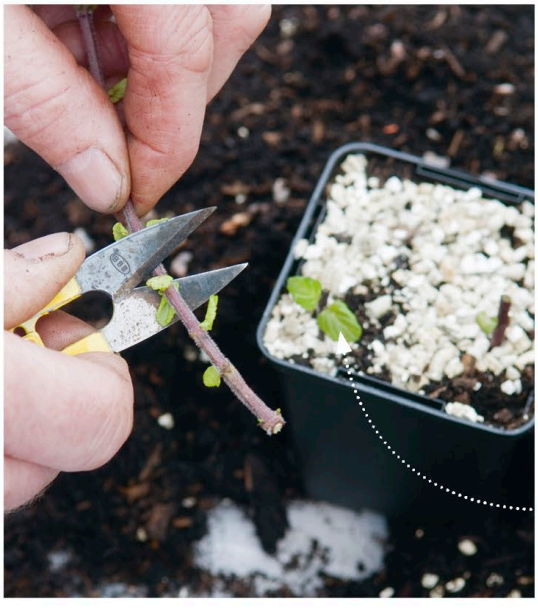
2 Select a long, healthy, firm root with a diameter of at least 5mm (¼in). Look for knobby structures (nodes), which appear at intervals and may already be sprouting new roots and shoots.



3 Cut a section 5–7cm (2–2¾in) long, with at least one node. Insert vertically into your potting mix. Consider growing more than is needed to insure against loss.

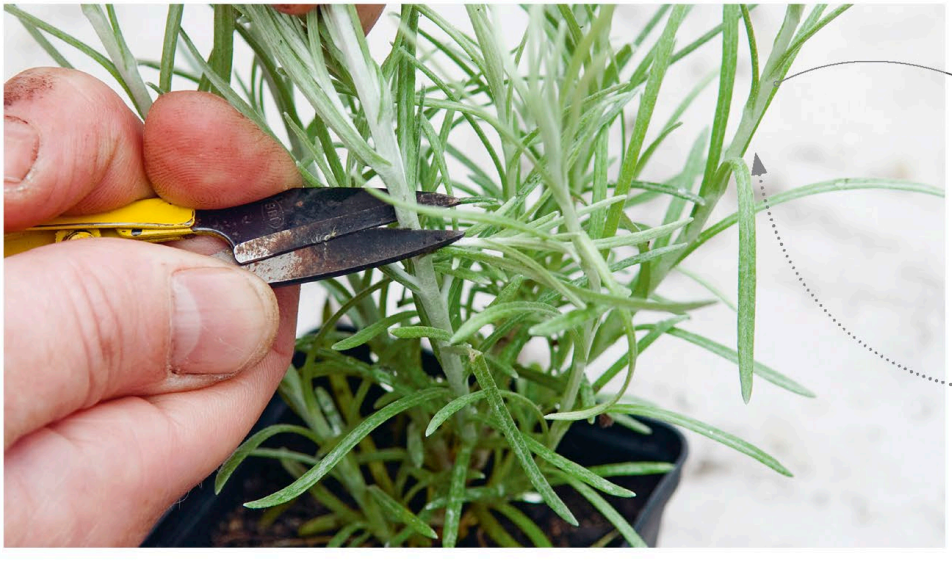
PROPAGATING MINT SUCKERS

1 Remove suckers from containerized plants, since they root if they touch bare soil. Keep one or two for cuttings, but dispose of the rest carefully as they grow well on the compost heap.



2 Cut just above a leaf node into segments 7–10cm (2¾–4in) long and insert four or five into each small pot, so that at least one pair of small young leaves is above the surface.

PINCHING OUT



Pinch out parts that are leaning over or looking untidy to leave behind the strongest growth

Sometimes there may not be adequate cutting material available. New side shoots will grow quickly if the top 5–10cm (2–4in) are pinched out. These shoots might make good cuttings.

DIVIDING **HERBS**

Many small-leaved, spreading, or mat-forming herbs can be easily multiplied by dividing and growing on more from a single plant. This is best done in late spring or early summer when the parent plant is in active growth.

YOU WILL NEED

- small and large plant pots
- plant labels
- scissors or sharp knife
- fine compost, well-draining compost, and vermiculite
- watering can

SEE ALSO

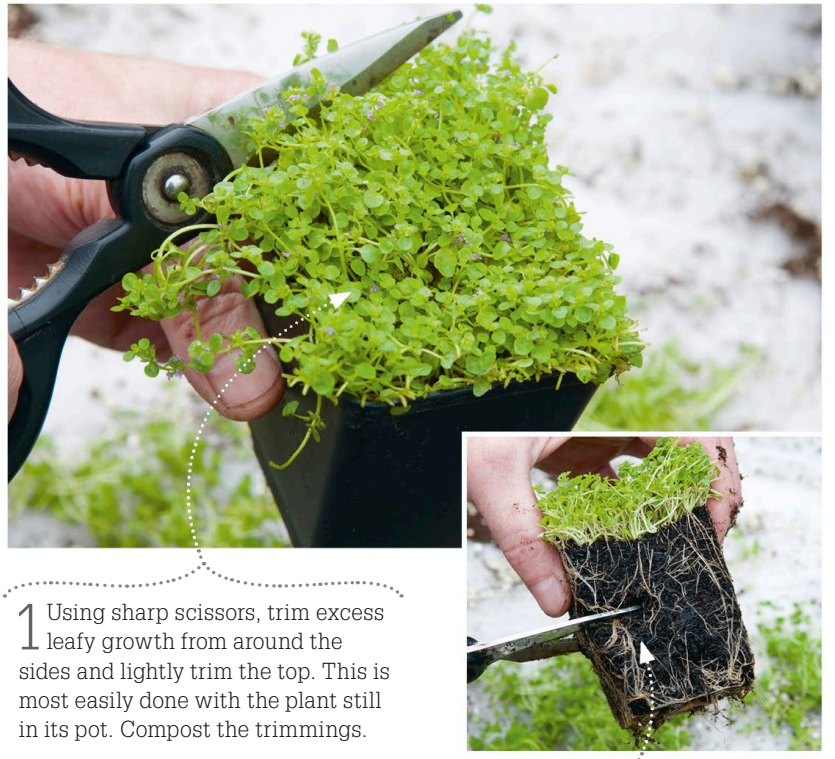
- **HERBS FROM SEED** >> 198/201
- **A HERB GARDEN** >> 204/205
- **GROW HERB CUTTINGS** >> 210/213

JARGON BUSTER

Leggy plants have a spindly and untidy appearance. They tend to flop over and produce fewer flowers.

Plants can become leggy for a number of reasons, such as not enough sunlight or nutrients in the soil.

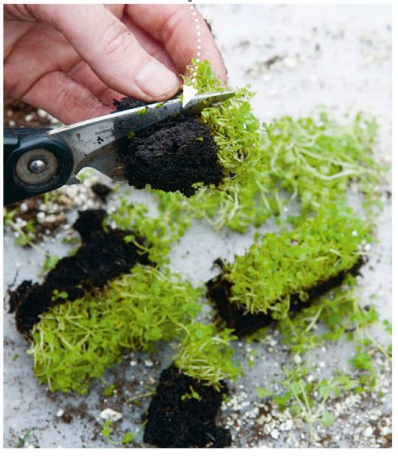
DIVISION BY CUTTING UP



1 Using sharp scissors, trim excess leafy growth from around the sides and lightly trim the top. This is most easily done with the plant still in its pot. Compost the trimmings.

2 Carefully remove the pot (for washing and reuse) and slice or cut the root ball in half. The bottom part can be discarded and composted as it is likely to be exhausted and filled with roots.

3 With this herb, the aim is to make plugs with a surface area of about 2x2cm (3/4x3/4in). By carefully cutting using scissors or a sharp knife it is possible to generate nine or ten good plugs.



4 Fill each pot with fine compost, firm down, and make a hole with your finger about 2cm (3/4in) deep. Insert one plug in each hole, gently firm in place, and water well.

5 Label each pot with the plant name and the propagation date. Place in a bright, warm spot and keep moist. Results should be clearly visible within a couple of weeks.

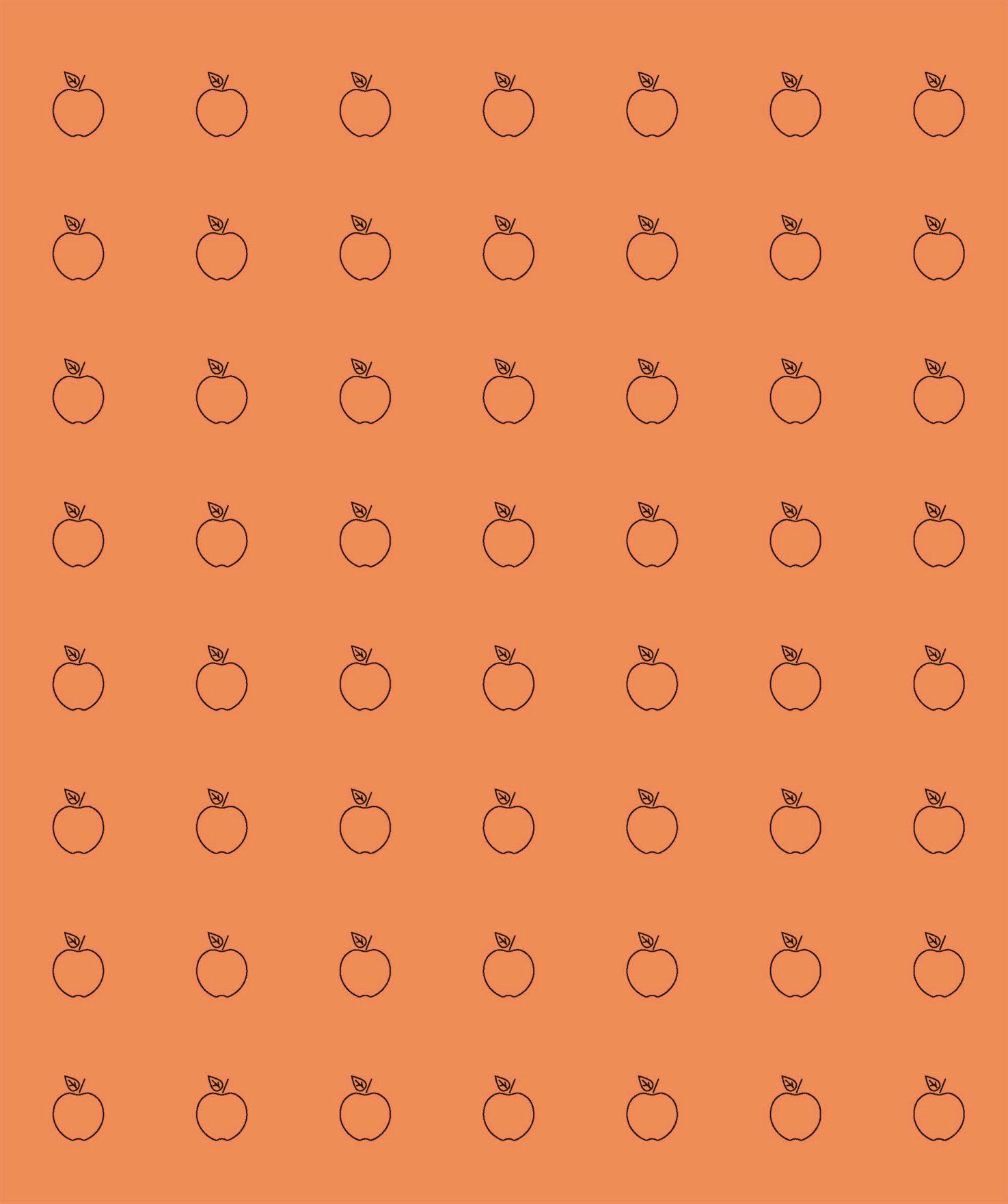
RESUSCITATING LEGGY PLANTS

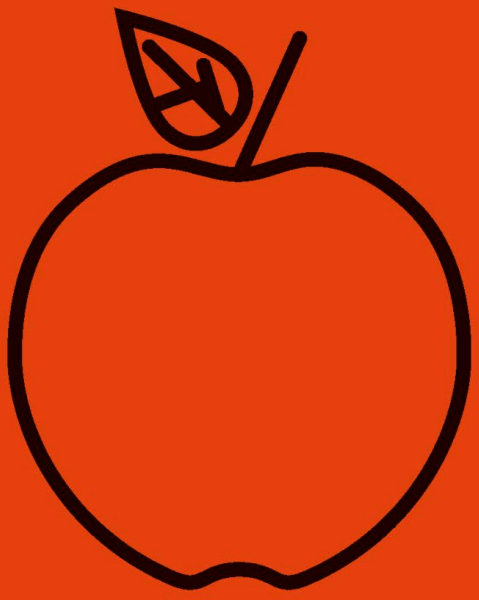
Remember to tease out the roots slightly

Leggy plants can be rescued to provide new plants or one compact large one. Partially fill a larger pot with compost and insert the herb. Cover the woody stems with compost up to the base of the leaves. Firm and keep moist until new roots develop, then divide the plant or use its stems for cuttings.

TEASING APART

Many pots of congested seedlings, such as basil, parsley, and chives, can be divided. The stems and roots are very fragile, so prise apart the clumps into no more than half a dozen portions.





FRUIT

PLANTING A BASKET **OF STRAWBERRIES**

Hanging baskets are a great way to make extra space for crops in small gardens, and look particularly beautiful when in flower or overflowing with ripe strawberries.

YOU WILL NEED

- strawberry plants
- hanging basket with bracket
- large plant pot
- plastic liner
- scissors
- multi-purpose compost
- water-retaining crystals (optional)
- liquid tomato fertilizer

SEE ALSO

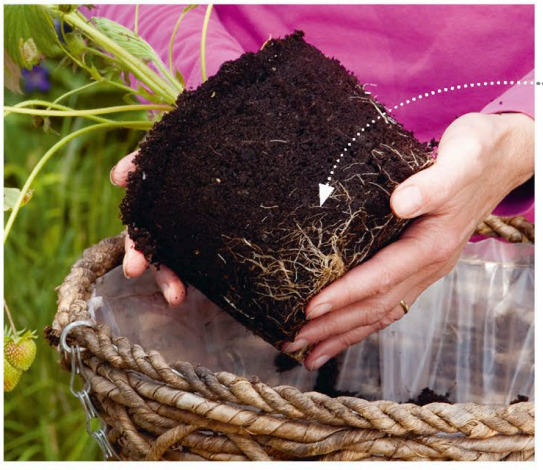
- **MAKE HANGING BASKETS** >> 38/39
- **HERB HANGING BASKET** >> 206/207

SWEET TEMPTATIONS

Sweet fruits can tempt many garden pests, particularly slugs and birds, both of which find it more difficult to reach the fruits when plants are suspended in the air. This leaves ripe berries easy for you to harvest.

Place the basket in a pot to keep it stable while planting

1 Place the basket in a pot to keep it stable while planting, and if it doesn't have an integral liner, line with durable plastic to retain compost and moisture. Cut drainage holes in the liner to prevent compost becoming waterlogged.



2 Water the plants in their pots. Add multi-purpose compost to the base of the basket, mixing in water-retaining crystals if desired, and arrange the plants so that the tops of the root balls are 2.5cm (1in) below the basket rim.

3 Fill around the plants with more compost, firming as you go. Make sure that the strawberries are not planted more deeply than they were in their original pots.

Ensure that the basket is not full to the rim, leaving space for watering

4 Soak the basket well and allow the water to drain before suspending it from a sturdy and well-secured bracket or hook. Water daily in warm weather and apply a liquid tomato fertilizer every two weeks once fruits appear.

PLANTING AN **APPLE TREE IN A POT**

With their delicate spring blossom and colourful crops, apple trees make beautiful features. Plant in large pots, place in a sunny site, and provide shelter from the wind to allow insects to pollinate the flowers.

YOU WILL NEED

- apple tree, eg a young dwarf variety
- large container pot
- broken plant pots
- soil-based compost
- slow-release fertilizer
- garden gloves

SEE ALSO

- **REPOTTING SHRUBS** >> 138/139
- **PLANT A TREE** >> 160/163
- **PRUNE AN APPLE TREE** >> 224/225

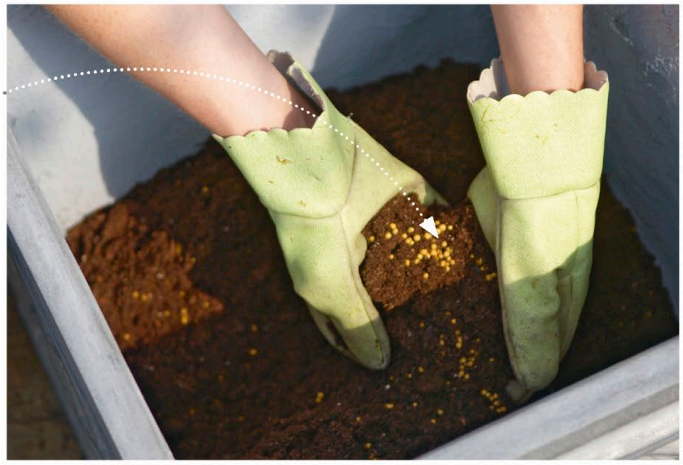
CARING FOR YOUR APPLE TREE

Once the apple tree is planted, never allow the compost to dry out, but avoid waterlogging. Cut out dead and diseased wood as soon as you see it. Repot every two years or as needed.

1 Add a layer of broken clay pots or gravel over the drainage holes to make sure that these do not become blocked and that water is allowed to flow away freely.

Choose a sturdy container suitable for housing the long, extensive roots of your apple tree

2 Fill the pot with soil-based compost. Mix in a slow-release fertilizer at the recommended rate (follow the instructions on the package). Remember to wear gloves when handling fertilizers.



3 Water the tree, knock it from its pot, and check that the top of the root ball will sit 5cm (2in) below the new container's rim. Tease out the roots to help them establish.

4 Position the tree carefully in the centre of the container. Fill around it with compost and firm, making sure that it is at the same level as it was in its original pot. Water well, and apply a compost mulch, leaving a space around the stem.

A miniature orchard is possible in a small garden with carefully grown and pruned fruit bushes and trees (such as these pear cordons), blackberries along a wall, and apples in a pot.

PRUNING AN **APPLE TREE**

Annual pruning of apple trees will reward you with lots of blossom, an abundance of fruit, and a beautifully shaped tree. Prune in winter when you can clearly see the branch structure.

YOU WILL NEED

- small pruning saw
- sharp pruning clippers
- garden gloves
- step ladder
- garden refuse bag

SEE ALSO

- **REMOVE A BRANCH** >> 166/167
- **PRUNING KNOW-HOW** >> 236/237

AVOID AUTUMN PRUNING

Avoid pruning apple trees in autumn because this may stimulate new growth that could suffer in winter. Winter is the best time to prune because the tree will be dormant.

1 Thin out young shoots as there is no room for them all to mature into fruiting branches. Leave about one or two young shoots to develop every 30cm (12in). Also remove any short or weak growths.

2 Work around the tree systematically to create a balanced framework with an open centre for good air circulation. Remove any upright branches or those growing at angles that distort the shape of the tree.

Make a clean cut to reduce the chance of disease entering the wound

3 Make your cut back to a main branch or to another of a similar size or smaller. Prune with restraint, as overpruned apple trees react vigorously the following year, making lots of leafy shoots with very few fruits.

SOFT FRUIT IN **SMALL SPACES**

Fruit bushes and canes, including many berries and currants, are reliably productive and sparkle with colourful crops for much of the summer. A careful choice of varieties of fruit and larger pots means you can grow soft fruit in even the smallest garden

KEY POINTS

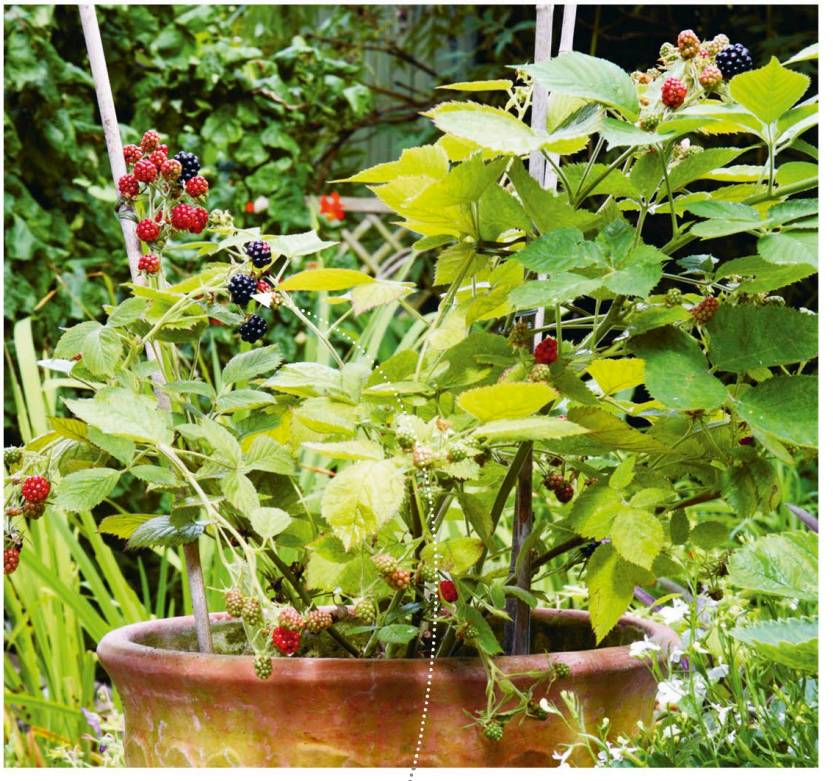
- **Birds enjoy** berries as much as we do. Before the berries start to ripen, put a fine net over the pot to keep them out.
- **Strawberries** are prone to disease and become less productive with age, so replace your plants every three years or so, using a clean pot and fresh compost.

SEE ALSO

- **STRAWBERRY BASKET** >> 218/219
- **TREE FRUIT IN SMALL SPACES** >> 228/229

PRUNING SOFT FRUIT

For raspberries and blackberries, remove the old canes at the base after they have fruited. For fruit bushes, prune in winter, taking out dead and crossing wood to open out the centre, and to keep the plant within bounds.



Closely related to the rampant, prickly hedgerow brambles, many modern types of blackberries are more compact, thornless, and have larger, sweeter fruits. Choose these forms for containers, and they will give you delicate white flowers then heavy crops of late-summer berries. Blackberries live for many years and are best planted in winter or spring in a 45cm (18in) pot of soil-based compost, such as John Innes No.2, in full sun or partial shade.

Many berries, such as gooseberries, blackcurrants, and redcurrants can be expensive to buy in the shops, but will grow well in containers of soil-based compost, such as John Innes No.2. They need a sunny spot with good air circulation to aid ripening. Do not allow the compost to dry out and water plants regularly, but not heavily, in dry weather to prevent the fruits splitting. Redcurrants and blackcurrants need a pot at least 45cm (18in) wide and deep. Gooseberries will grow in 38cm (15in) pots.

Gooseberries come in green, red, and yellow varieties

Grow different types of strawberries to ensure your pot, or strawberry planter, as here, produces berries over a long period of time. There are early-, mid-, and late-season varieties. Provide good drainage and feed plants fortnightly with tomato fertilizer once the berries have formed.

Blueberries are well suited to pots as they thrive in acid soil, which may not be the type in your garden. Plant in ericaceous compost in a 38cm (15in) pot in full sun or part shade. Net them against birds once the fruit develops. Here, a cane wigwam with garden netting is used.

TREE FRUIT IN **SMALL SPACES**

Fruit trees can be trained to grow as cordons (single-trunked trees) ideal for packing lots of tasty fruit into small spaces. Mix varieties when choosing apples and pears, to ensure good pollination and crops.

KEY POINTS

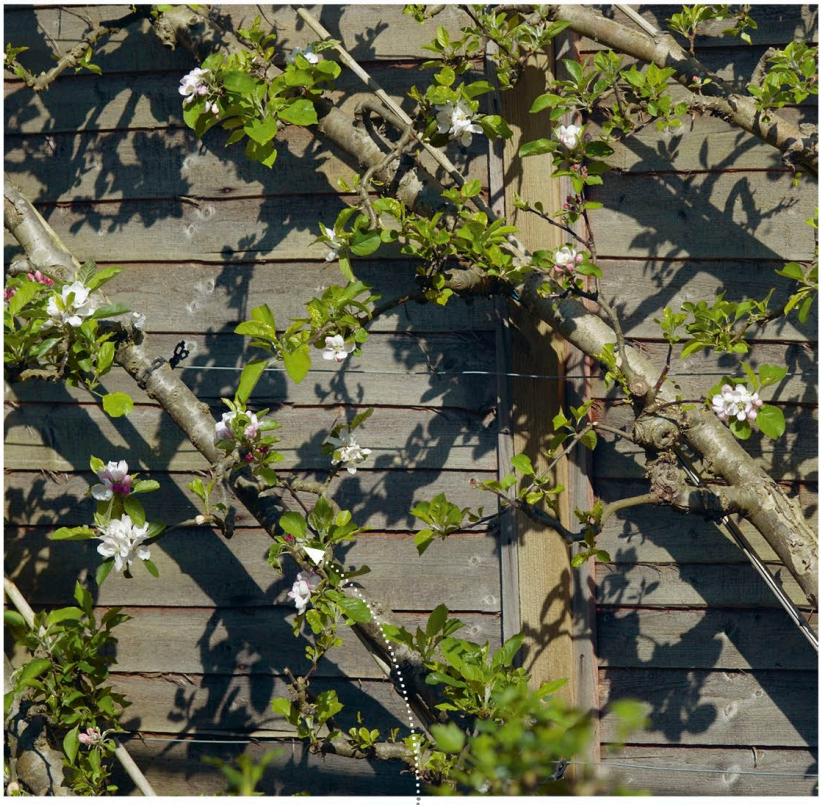
- **Apple and pear** varieties suitable for growing in this way bear their fruits on short side shoots (spurs) along the length of their stem, making them very productive for their size.
- **If you are growing** several varieties of apples or pears, you need to make sure that they are compatible with each other for pollination. Seek advice when you buy as not all varieties are capable of pollinating each other.

SEE ALSO

- **STRAWBERRY BASKET** >> 218/219
- **APPLE TREE POT** >> 220/221
- **SOFT FRUIT IN SMALL SPACES** >> 226/227

JARGON BUSTER

Cordons are single-trunked trees on dwarfing rootstocks, which means that their size is restricted. Apple and pear trees are most commonly grown as cordons.



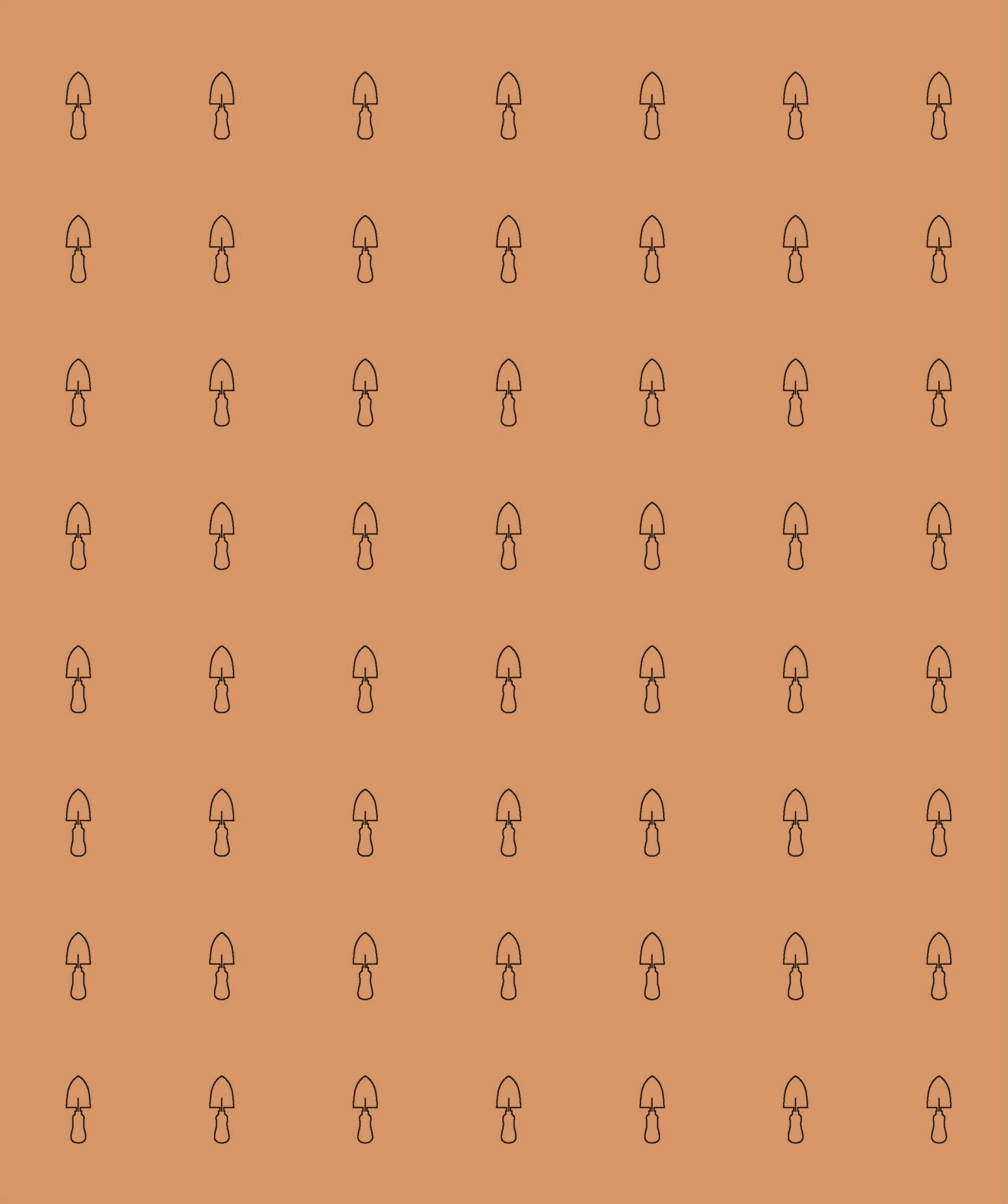
Cordons Traditionally a cordon is grown at a 45-degree angle. Remove the first year's blossom from the trees after planting to encourage strong roots. Prune new growth to two buds each year at the end of summer to keep the tree compact.

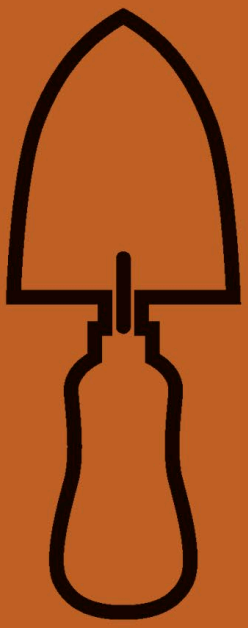
Horizonal cordon Also known as a stepover, the horizontal cordon makes an interesting and productive edging to a path or border. Keep the side shoots short in summer to restrict its growth and channel its energy into producing fruit.

Provide sturdy support, especially for a young tree

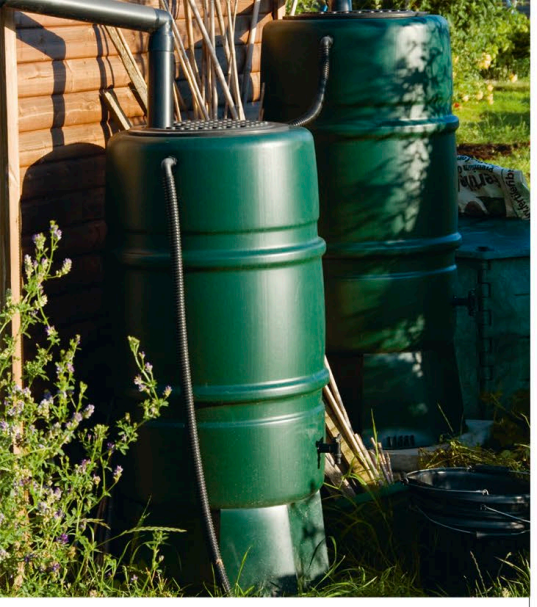
Ballerina apples A Ballerina tree is bred to grow in a vertical, columnar shape with its fruit borne on compact spurs close to the main stem. It needs little summer pruning. Four dessert cultivars are available: 'Bolero', 'Polka', 'Waltz', and 'Flamenco'.

Crop choices Many apple and pear varieties are available to grow as cordons or as compact bushes. You can buy them pre-trained to give immediate structure in your garden. Choose mature specimens that are ready to fruit if you want instant impact.





PRACTICALITIES



WATERING **PLANTS**

During the heat of summer, it helps to be organized when watering so that you can target only the areas in the garden that need attention, and avoid wasting water on those areas that do not.

KEY POINTS

- **If you water for long enough** in one place, moisture penetrates deep into the soil and plant roots grow down in search of it.
- **If you water lightly** and dampen only a top layer of soil, the roots will come up to the surface where they are vulnerable to drought.
- **Avoid overfilling containers** with potting mix, but leave a gap to allow water to pool and sink in.

SEE ALSO

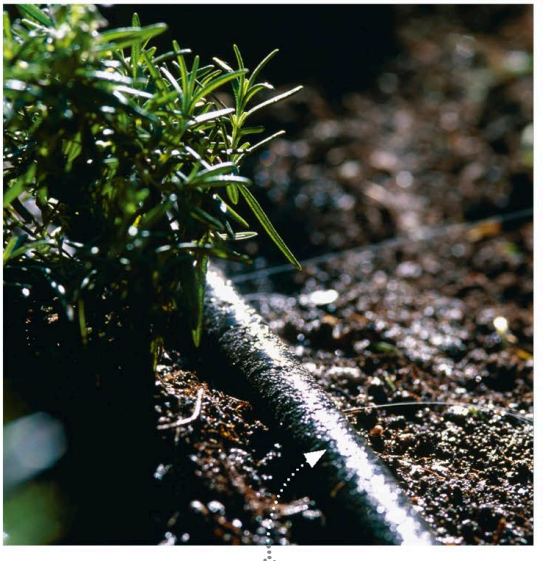
- **KNOW YOUR SOIL** >> 12/13
- **LAWN CARE** >> 70/73

SAVING WATER

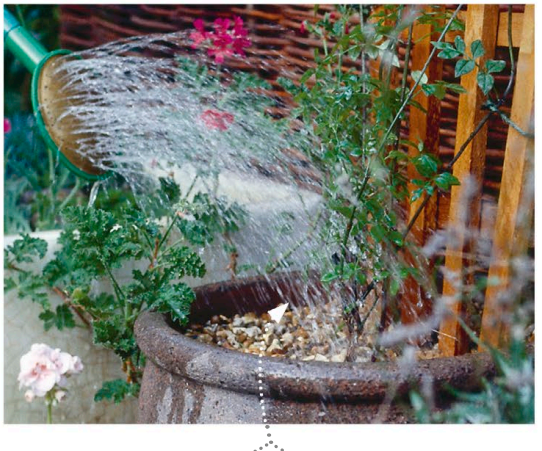
Rainwater can be collected in water butts positioned at down pipes. "Grey" water (from baths, showers, and basins) can be recycled, provided that it is not polluted with detergents or other cleaning agents.

What to water You should only need to water newly planted specimens, container plants, and freshly laid turf (established lawns never need watering). Planting plants that live for two years or more between mid-autumn and mid-spring reduces the amount of watering needed during the critical period when roots are establishing; unless there's a drought, these new additions won't need much summer watering.

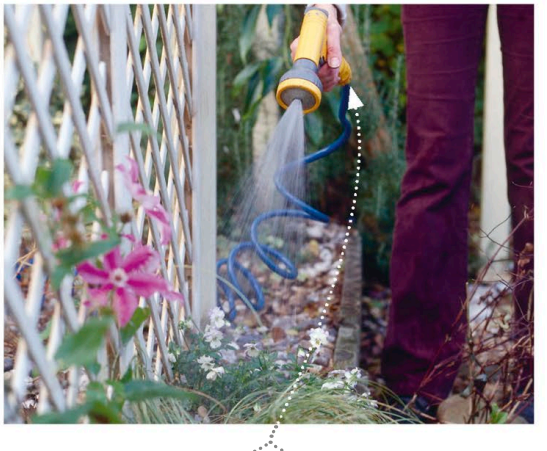
Watering efficiently Water in the early morning or evening; if you water in the heat of the day moisture evaporates rapidly. Target the roots directly with a gentle flow or trickle and allow water time to soak in – avoid blasting the ground with a strong jet as this will erode the soil and expose roots. Don't use sprinklers – if you water foliage from above, much of it evaporates or is deflected.



Seep hose Sometimes called a leaky hose or trickle irrigation, this consists of a pipe perforated with numerous small holes. This pipe is attached to an outside tap with leak-proof connectors, and laid directly on the soil surface, weaving between plants and, if necessary, is held in place with wire clips.



Watering containers As pots are watered frequently, the potting mix quickly erodes to expose roots, especially in the case of shallow-rooting species, like box. Try watering onto a piece of clay pot, to help dissipate the flow, or use a mulch of bark, compost, or gravel, to avoid moisture loss.



Lances and waterguns Watering with a hosepipe is less wasteful when you fit a watergun with an on-off finger trigger. Waterguns have a broad head and the flow rate can be adjusted from a strong jet to a gentle shower, the latter setting being much less likely to cause soil erosion.

MAKING YOUR OWN **COMPOST**

Make the most of a quiet corner of your garden with a compost bin, and turn kitchen peelings and garden waste into valuable compost for free. There are bins to fit plots of every size, and the rich compost they generate can be used to give your plants a nutrient boost year after year.

KEY POINTS

- **Find a suitable site** for a compost heap or bin in full sun or part shade. Also place the bin on soil rather than a paved surface to provide access for creatures that help the composting process.
- **Add water to a heap** if it looks too dry. Remember, the composting process needs both moisture and air to circulate.

SEE ALSO

- **IMPROVE YOUR SOIL** >> 16/17
- **CHOOSING COMPOST** >> 18/19

BIN ESSENTIALS

A compost bin must have an open base, a lid, and space to turn the heap. Also try to match the size of the bin to the amount of organic waste that your garden or kitchen will generate.

Filling your bin Try to achieve an equal balance of nitrogen-rich green material, such as spent vegetable plants and kitchen peelings, and drier carbon-rich waste, like dead leaves, small twigs, and shredded paper. Do not compost cooked foods, which attract vermin. Mix different types of waste, rather than creating thick layers, to allow moisture and air to circulate.

Turning the compost Waste breaks down faster in the warm, damp centre of a compost heap than at the cool, dry edges, so for all the material to break down evenly it needs to be "turned". Wait until the bin is full and then turn the contents onto the soil, mix them together, and then put them back again. Don't add more waste; the compost should be ready to use in a few months.

OTHER FORMS OF COMPOST

Making leafmould
Fallen autumn leaves are a valuable resource because they break down to form dark, crumbly leafmould, which is an excellent soil improver. Leafmould is easy to make, by gathering up damp leaves and placing them in a plastic sack. Tie the top, pierce with a garden fork, and place it somewhere shady for two years while the leaves decompose.

Leafmould is an excellent soil improver for raised beds and containers

Using wormeries Wormeries are good for small gardens where there is less waste to compost. Specially designed plastic containers, with good drainage and ventilation, house composting worms to break down organic matter into a fertile soil improver. Feed them with leafy garden waste.

Bokashi composting Wheat bran inoculated with micro-organisms is used to ferment organic material, including vegetable scraps, meat, fish, and dairy products. The process does not produce odours, and a sealed container keeps away flies, making bokashi ideal for indoor composting.

HOW AND WHEN **TO PRUNE**

Pruning keeps plants healthy, can restrict their size, and enables them to produce their best display of flowers, fruits, stems, or foliage. Most pruning tasks can be carried out annually, but those outlined here are best tackled as soon as problems are seen.

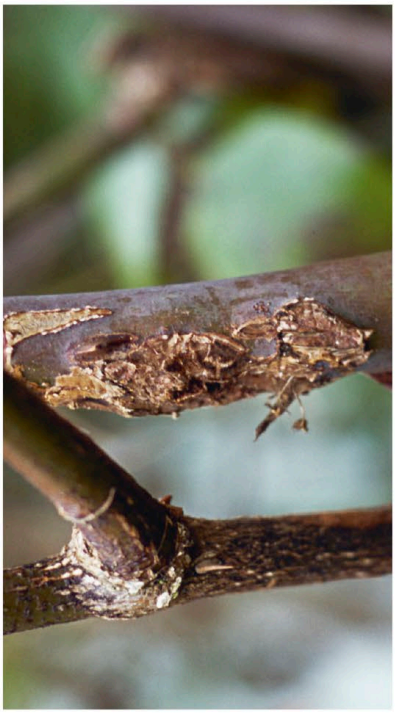
KEY POINTS

- **Buds and young shoots** can be damaged by spring frosts. Prune plants back to healthy, unfrosted buds to prevent dieback or diseases from starting at the frosted points.
- **Reversion is when leaves** of a variegated plant turn pure green. When you see any shoots showing signs of reversion, remove them completely using secateurs.

SEE ALSO

- **REMOVE A BRANCH** >> 166/167
- **PRUNE AN APPLE TREE** >> 224/225

Dead wood on a hornbeam



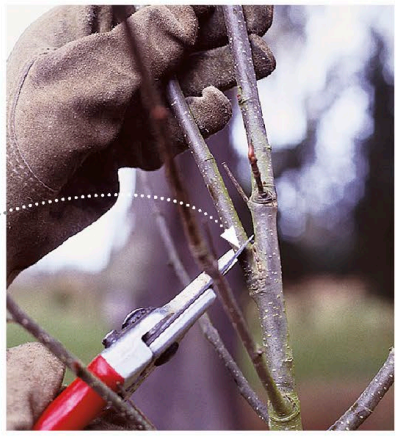
Coral spot on a branch

Cutting out dead and diseased wood Whenever you see dead or diseased wood on any tree or shrub, remove it immediately. If dead wood is left on a plant, disease can enter more easily and it may move down the stems, attacking healthy growth. Dead wood also looks unsightly. When a tree or shrub has been damaged, its natural defences will eventually make a barrier in the form of a slight swelling between the live and dead wood. In this instance, remove the dead wood above the barrier.

DEADHEADING TO PROMOTE FLOWERING

The removal of dead flower heads encourages some flowering plants to produce more blooms. Most faded flowers can be snapped off with the fingers.

Dealing with twin leaders
Twin leaders occur at the top of a tree when two stems of similar vigour grow close together. Remove the weaker stem using secateurs. If left unpruned, the stems will try to grow away from each other, causing a weakness to develop. One stem may then break away from the tree, causing serious damage. Although this may not happen until the tree is much older, prompt action when the plant is young will prevent future problems.



Remove the weaker stem

A single leader has strength

A sucker growing from below the graft (knobbly bulge) on a rose

Removing suckers A sucker is a vigorous strong growth that emerges from a point low down on a plant, close to the root system. If left, it can choke the plant or reduce its vigour. Such shoots are normally found on plants that have been grafted, such as roses, and usually look quite different to the rest of the plant. If seen early on, remove such a shoot by quickly tugging it away with a gloved hand, or if it has grown too large, remove the shoot using secateurs.

CARING FOR YOUR **TOOLS**

Using the right pruning tools and correct safety equipment helps to ensure that pruning is safe and enjoyable, and that you do not spread infections from plant to plant. You will also protect yourself against accidents if your equipment is well maintained, and extend the life of your tools.

YOU WILL NEED

- piece of metal with a straight edge, such as a penknife
- steel or wire wool
- coarse brush
- lubricating oil
- cleaning cloth
- garden gloves

SEE ALSO

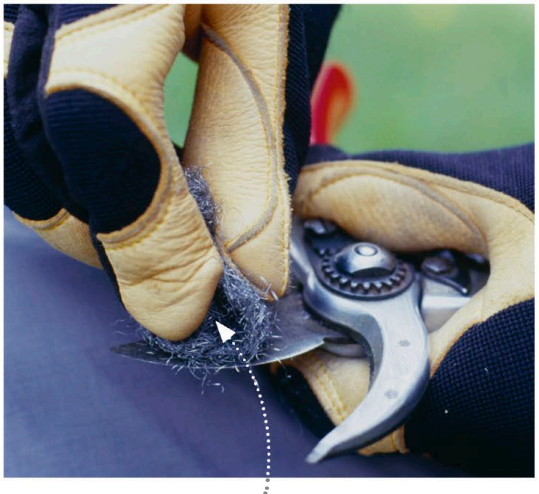
- **PRUNING KNOW-HOW** >> 236/237
- **PREVENT DISEASE** >> 246/247

SAFETY TIPS

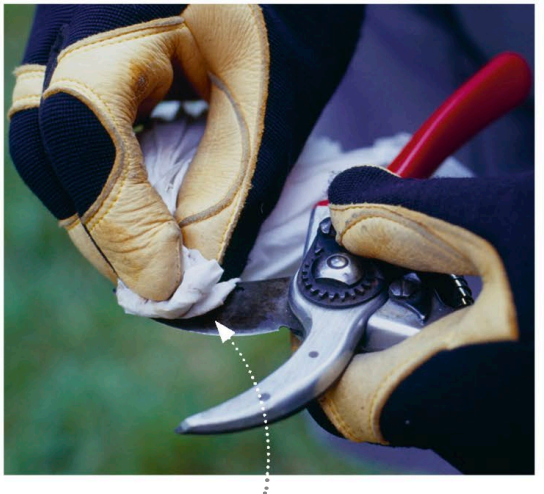
Wear gloves when using sharp tools, and protective goggles when using electric trimmers; also, for the latter, do use an emergency circuit breaker.

CLEANING SECATEURS

1 When pruning, plant sap dries and sticks to the blades, making them stiff. Scrape off the sap using a piece of metal with a straight edge, such as a metal plant label or penknife.



2 Then rub the blade with steel wool to remove any remaining dried sap and rust or other material. To prevent accidental cuts, wear gloves while cleaning your blades.



3 When the blade is clean, rub on some lubricating oil. This guards against rusting, and keeps the secateurs sharp and clean while they are being stored.

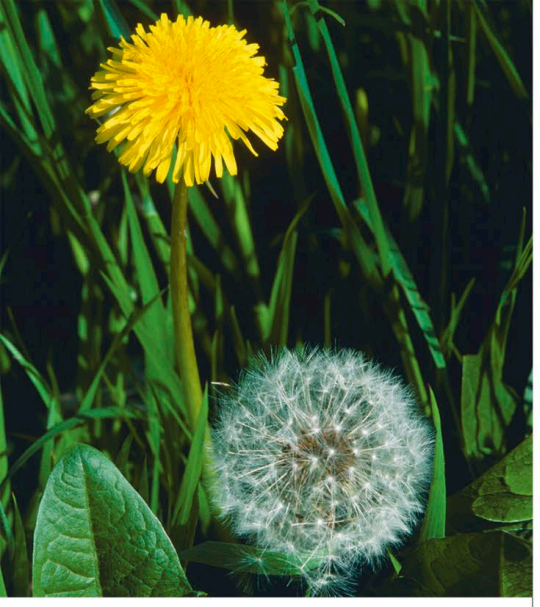
CLEANING PRUNING SAWS

1 When you have finished pruning, use a coarse brush to remove any sawdust lodged in the saw's teeth. If this is left it can harden and reduce the saw's cutting ability.

2 Next, use wire wool to rub both sides of the saw blade. This removes dried sap and dirt, which can also make the saw less efficient.

3 Before putting the saw away after cleaning, rub some lubricating oil onto it with a cloth to protect the blade from rusting.

Bees are efficient pollinators and help to make your garden grow. Choose plants that will bloom from early spring to early autumn to attract these welcome visitors for as many months as possible.



TROUBLESHOOTING **WEEDS**

Weeds are an unfortunate fact of life in the garden, but by weeding from the start of the first growing season, you will gradually reduce the number that appear year on year. More persistent weeds may need special treatment: here's a guide to the worst offenders and how to manage them.

KEY POINTS

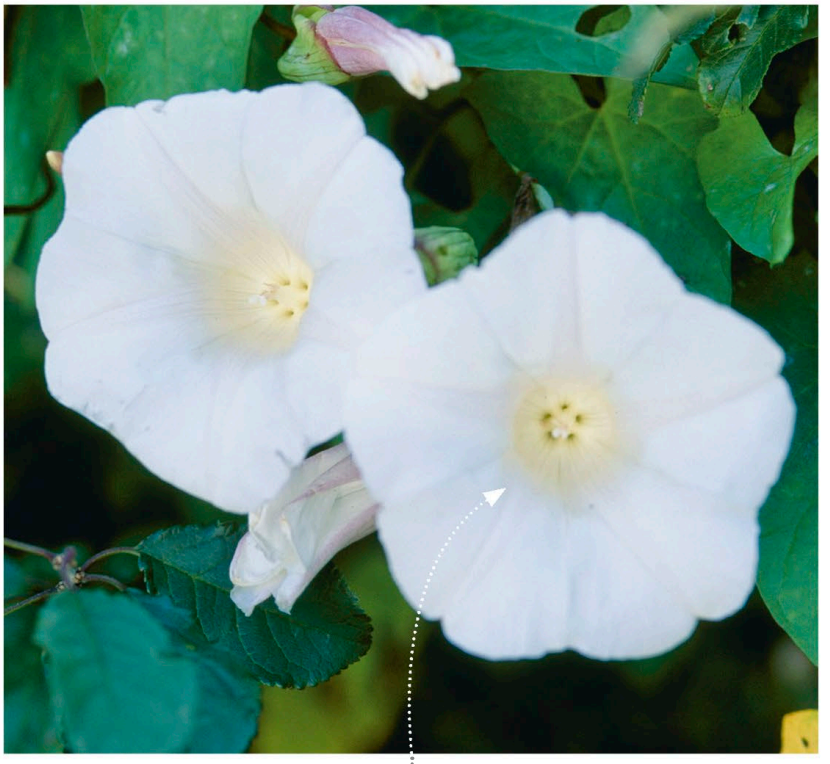
- **Why weed?** It is often said that a weed is nothing more than a plant in the wrong place. This is true, but many common weeds will quickly overrun a garden.
- **Clearing a lawn** of weeds can be done simply enough with a fork, a kitchen knife, or a daisy grubber.
- **A garden hoe** is useful for removing young weed seedlings from beds.

SEE ALSO

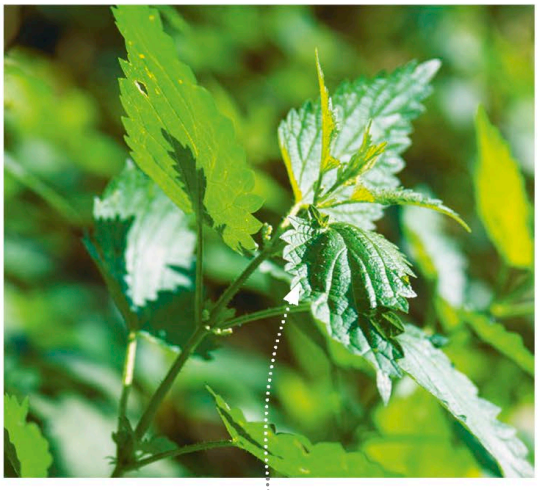
- **LAWN CARE** >> 70/73
- **DEAL WITH PESTS** >> 244/245
- **PREVENT DISEASE** >> 246/247

FRIEND OR FOE?

Dandelions are a valuable source of food for many pollinators. If you can bear it, spare a patch of your garden to let dandelions flower for bees and hoverflies. You can deadhead them after flowering to stop them seeding.



Bindweed This twining climber scrambles over plants and chokes them. Wiry stems, heart-shaped leaves, and white or pink trumpet-shaped flowers are produced by a network of white roots. The smallest piece of root produces a shoot. Dig out roots or, if the weed is very persistent, treat the shoots by painting on a herbicide.

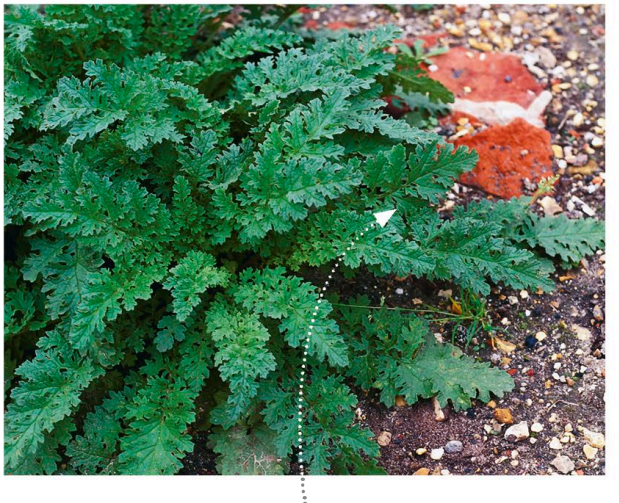


Stinging nettle The stinging hairs on the foliage can make brushes with this weed painful. Small plants often lurk undetected in borders. Long-lived nettles spread quickly just under the soil by thin runners, which soon form new plants. Dig out the plant (wearing gloves), ensuring that all runners and young plants are removed.

Dock leaves are useful, however, to treat stings if nettle is nearby

Dock With its soft, lush foliage, dock is a large weed often found in beds and borders, and sometimes in grass. It grows from a long, deep tap root that snaps off easily and must be removed from the soil to prevent the plant from regrowing. Keep removing the top growth to kill single plants.

Japanese knotweed A pernicious weed with fast-growing, rather attractive stems up to 2m (6ft) tall, clothed densely with lush, heart-shaped leaves. It has a tough, rampaging rootstock and the tiniest piece of root can form a new colony. Repeated applications of herbicide and removal of plants may eventually prove effective.



Common ragwort Usually found in lawns, this short-lived weed has hairy, rather unpleasant-smelling leaves with ruffled margins. Yellow daisy-like flowers appear on tall stems and are cut by mowing. It is unsightly and poisonous to livestock. Pull out the rosettes by hand or with a daisy grubber before the plant sets seed.

DEALING WITH **PESTS**

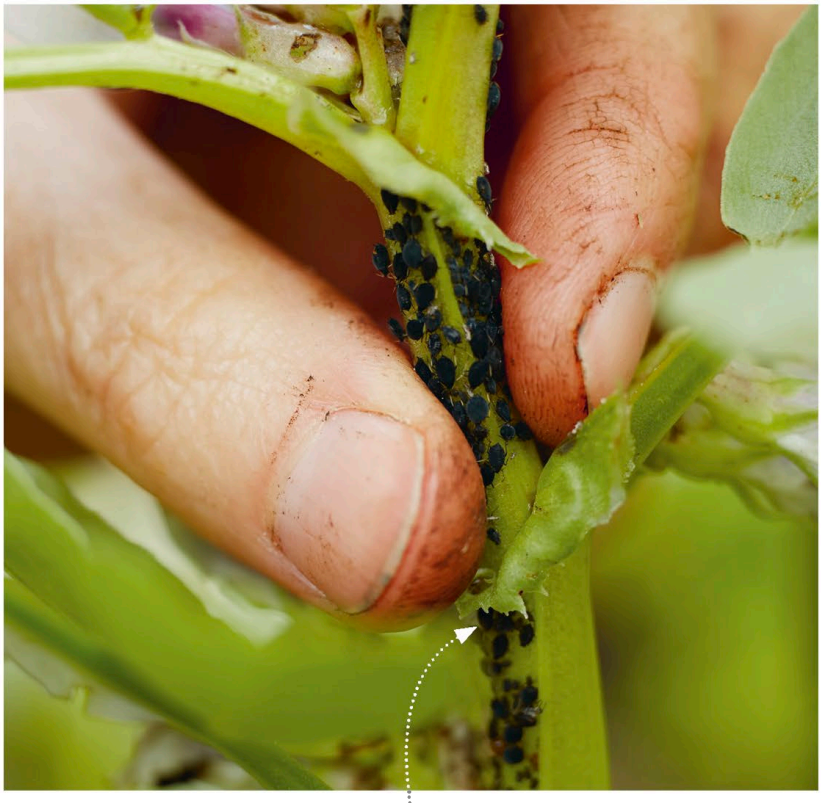
Healthy plants can withstand pests more readily than those that are struggling. However, pests can still damage healthy plants, causing loss of crops or flowers, or even death. Use non-chemical methods first, and pesticides only as a last resort.

KEY POINTS

- **Welcome friendly predators** that eat pests. A few logs in a corner will shelter ground beetles and may encourage hedgehogs, which feed on slugs and snails.
- **Avoid growing similar plants** in the same spot for too long, especially soft fruit and vegetables, as they may become more likely to succumb to pests over time.

SEE ALSO

- **WEEDING OUT** >> 242/243
- **PREVENT DISEASE** >> 246/247
- **GARDEN FRIENDS** >> 248/249



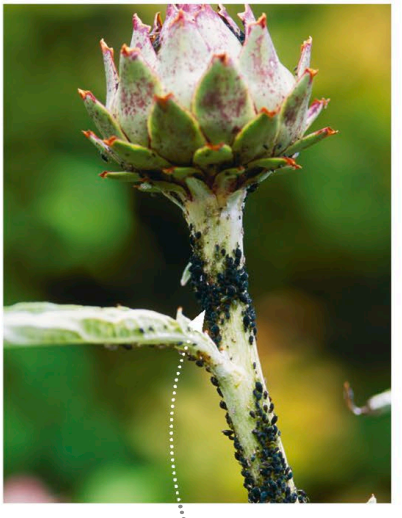
Act quickly As soon as you spot a pest, remove it, even if there is no damage to be seen. Clean aphids from shoots by squeezing them between your fingers; pluck slugs and snails from foliage and dispose of them.

BOTTLE BARRIERS

Protect vulnerable young plants using physical barriers made from plastic bottles (above). Cut the bottoms off clear plastic drinks bottles and place them over the plants to help protect them from slugs and snails.

Resort to chemicals Sometimes, severe pest attacks may threaten to kill a plant. In these cases, responsible use of pesticides will deal swiftly with the problem, causing minimal damage to other beneficial creatures.

Ants When ants build their nests in the lawn or in planted containers, they may affect plant growth and become a nuisance. However, unless particularly troublesome, they are best left alone.



Aphids Also called greenfly or blackfly, these sap-suckers affect many plants, especially roses, distorting growth and spreading disease. Encourage ladybirds as predators.

Slugs and snails The best known of garden pests, these voracious feeders eat soft plant material, usually at night, decimating plants such as hostas.

Remove weeds and garden rubbish that may be home to slugs and snails

PREVENTING **DISEASES**

When plants look unwell and there is no sign of any pests, a plant disease may be the cause. There are ways to minimize the risk of disease, and if you can identify common problems, you should be able to treat plants quickly.

KEY POINTS

- **Keeping plants healthy** can reduce the risk of disease: outbreaks of disease are often worse when plants are under stress due to lack of water or nutrients.
- **When buying a new plant,** check that it is healthy and suited to its intended position. This, along with good aftercare, helps prevent problems later.

SEE ALSO

- **CHOOSE HEALTHY PLANTS** >> 20/21
- **WEEDING OUT** >> 242/243
- **DEAL WITH PESTS** >> 244/245

Removing contaminants An important part of looking after healthy plants is to keep the garden tidy. This includes removing and disposing of diseased plant material, such as fallen rose leaves infected with black spot. Old, fallen foliage can cause further infection, as spores released from the fungus on the leaf are spread about on the air.

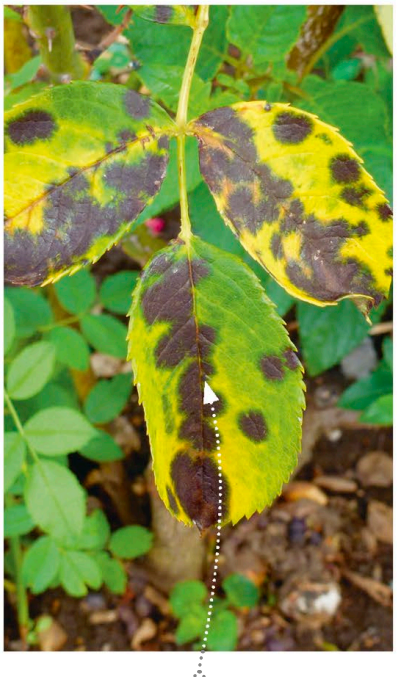
PLANT VIRUSES

Viruses usually cause distorted foliage growth or strange colour breaks in flowers. The virus particles are present in the sap of infected plants and can be spread by aphids. Affected plants are usually destroyed.

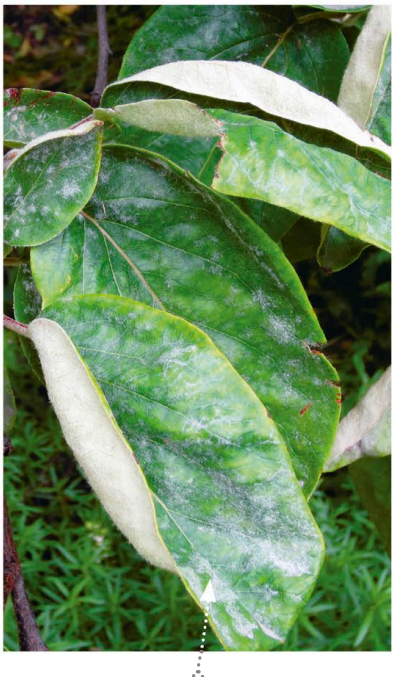
Prevention and cure While keeping plants in good health and removing materials that may harbour disease can help to prevent outbreaks, sometimes the only option is to use a chemical, such as a fungicide, to cure infected plants. A combination of prevention and cure is usually the best way to deal with plant diseases.

If spraying fungicides, always follow the instructions and use protective gear as recommended

COMMON DISEASES

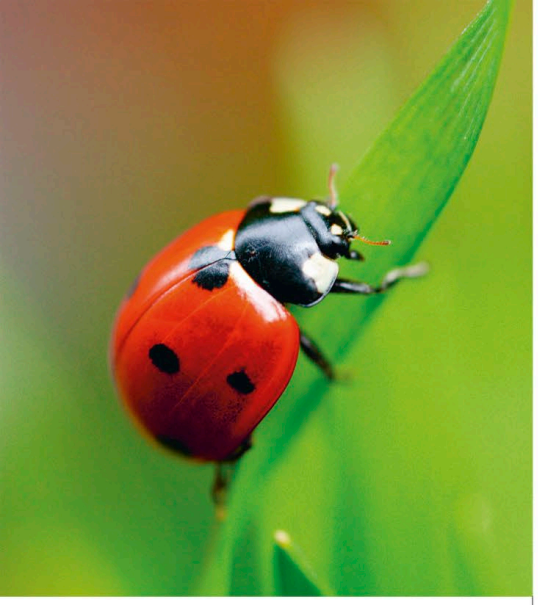


Black spot This fungal disease, spread by splashing rain or on the air, causes black spots, sometimes with yellow margins, on leaves. Chemical controls are effective, and good plant care and hygiene are important.



Powdery mildew This silvery-white fungus affects the leaves of many plants, which eventually yellow and then fall. Dry conditions are often to blame, so keep plants moist and spray with a suitable fungicide if necessary.

Rust A fungal disease, this produces orange patches on the undersides of leaves, causing them to fall early. Remove infected material, improve air circulation, and spray with a suitable fungicide.



KNOW YOUR **GARDEN FRIENDS**

Some wild creatures help to pollinate plants, break down compost, and prey on pests, so make these friendly visitors welcome in your garden.

KEY POINTS

- **The best way to** encourage helpful wildlife into the garden is to provide spaces for insects and birds to nest and to grow plants for them to feed, if possible, all year round.
- **Building homes for wildlife** can be as simple as leaving a small patch of the garden to grow wild, a pile of leaves unswept, or even making a small wildlife pond.

SEE ALSO

- **WEEDING OUT** >> 242/243
- **DEAL WITH PESTS** >> 244/245
- **PREVENT DISEASE** >> 246/247

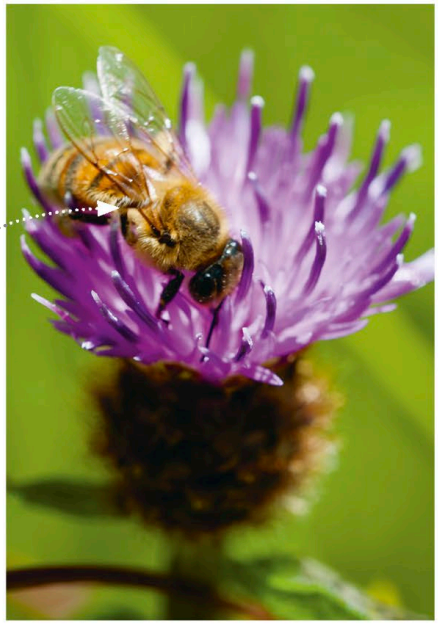
Busy bees The flowers of many vegetables, such as runner beans, need to be pollinated by insects in order to set their crop. Bees are excellent pollinators, so include ornamental flowers in your vegetable garden to entice them in.

BEE HOUSE

Solitary bees are excellent pollinators, but they can struggle to find nesting sites. A nesting box filled with drilled bamboo canes, or a log with drilled holes, will help to encourage them into your garden.

Friendly pest predators

Not all insects found in the vegetable garden or flower bed are pests, and many of them prey on harmful insects that can destroy entire crops. It is well worth encouraging them into your plot to try and achieve a natural balance, where pest numbers are kept low. Most pesticide sprays, even organic ones, kill beneficial insects as well as pests, so are best used only as a last resort.



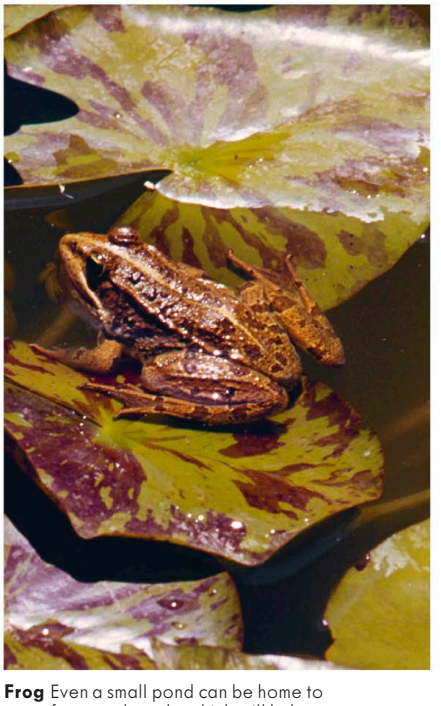
Hoverflies are essential allies Sometimes mistaken for bees, the adults are great pollinators, while the larvae are voracious feeders on insect pests.

Ladybird larvae The adults are familiar (see opposite), but the less appealing larvae (above) enjoy feasting on juicy aphids.

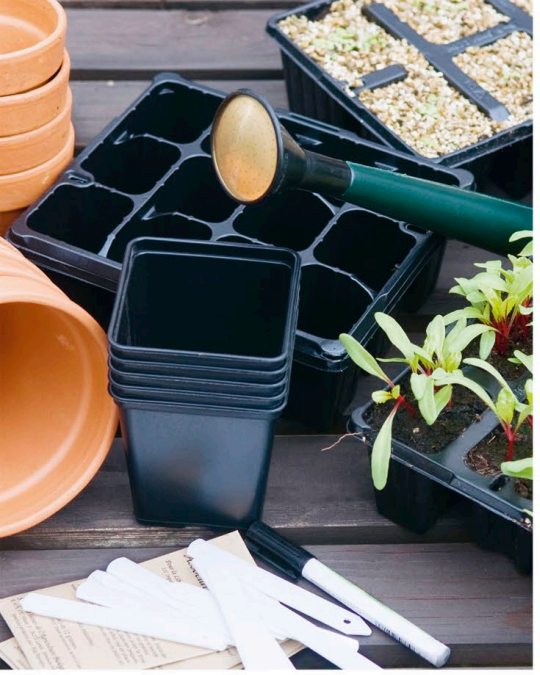
Helpful animals and birds

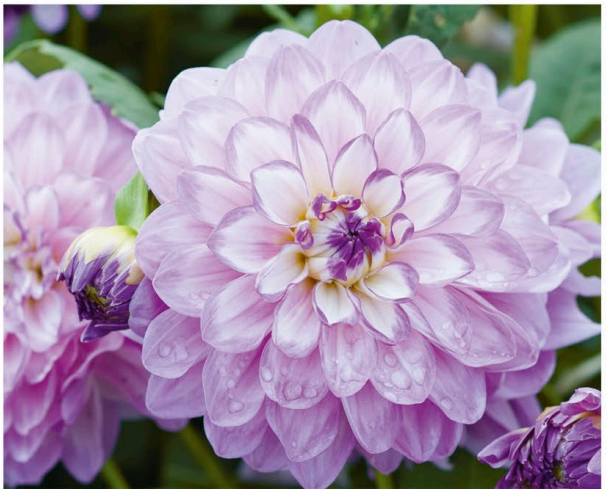
Although they may be elusive, many larger garden residents, such as birds and hedgehogs, can be extremely heplful in the garden, feeding on slugs and all kinds of other unwelcome visitors. Birds soon flock to gardens where food is provided and different species will pick off insects and even feed on snails while they are there. Create suitable habitats for all kinds of creatures and they will repay you with a healthier garden.

Brandling worms Smaller and redder than the usual earthworm, these creatures rapidly reduce vegetable matter to compost.



Frog Even a small pond can be home to many frogs and toads, which will help to keep slug numbers in check.





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